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# Marxism Today


MARGOT HEINEMANN — THE CAMPAIGN FOR NATIONALISATION

ALAN BUSH — OPERA AND BALLET

IDRIS COX — DEMOCRACY AND AFRICA'S LIBERATION

R. GARAUDY — BOURGEOIS MORALITY AND COMMUNIST MORALITY

J. WETHERBY — TAKE-OVER BIDS

DISCUSSION:

JOHN McGRATH
LIONEL FORMAN — ON THE FORMATION OF NATIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA


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# Marxism Today

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# The Campaign for Nationalisation

*Margot Heinemann*

IN the Tory propaganda build-up for the General Election, the attack on nationalisation is given a central place. The campaign is carried forward on several levels. For the highbrows and the carriage trade generally, there is the report on Nationalisation by the Federation of British Industries or the appeals of the Institute of Directors for funds to fight "back-door nationalisation". For the middlebrows, expensive newspaper advertising is laid on by the Iron and Steel Federation, with large glamourised half-tones of reputedly Labour journalists testifying to the steel ring's model behaviour as employer and supplier. For general mass consumption, there is the steel firms' simple good-fellow slogan appeal ("It's not your vote we want, it's your voice"), backed by the hard "market research" of Mr. Colin Hurry and his opinion polls in the marginal constituencies. What is certain is that the Tories have picked on nationalisation as the weakest point in Labour's programme, the one on which prejudice and hostility against Socialism can most easily be aroused, and are pouring in millions (not returnable as election expenses) to that end.

The boot ought, of course, to be on the other foot. The Tory industrial record of the last four years is, goodness knows, nothing to boast of, with production stagnant or falling despite increased productivity, unemployment rising, cotton facing serious depression, Britain's exports outdistanced by those of West Germany and Japan, scientific manpower and application falling behind the United States and the Soviet Union. All this cries out for a Socialist policy—for planned economy, national ownership of industry, production for use. But these alternatives have been cut out of Labour's immediate programme.

The watering down of the movement's traditional Socialist aims and measures was put over to Labour Party members in 1957 in the name of election strategy. A milder programme would, it was alleged, attract the floating voter. The effect of all these compromises and retreats has in fact been to put the Labour Party on the defensive just when it ought to be attacking most confidently. Instead of exposing the Tory-owned monopolies the Labour leaders have cut away that line of argument in advance ("Most large firms are serving the nation well," declared *Industry and Society* in 1957). Over the greater part of industry, except for Steel and Road Haulage, Labour's current policy is to leave well alone, let big business remain in control, and buy enough shares in private industry to allow national funds to benefit from monopoly profits and capital gains. The field is left open for the Tories to attack the sins of nationalised industries, and for the Labour leaders to defend them as best they can.

In this ill-smelling political fug the declaration in support of extended nationalisation by the Transport and General Workers' conference and its General Secretary comes like a blast of fresh air. The resolution reaffirms the union's belief in public ownership; accepts the policy of share-buying only as complementary to, not an alternative for, nationalisation; calls for appointments to key boards to be enthusiasts for public ownership; and demands that all available means should be used to develop effective workers' participation in management and control. Here is the spirit on which Socialists can draw to compel a change in Labour's policy and actions.

**Should we defend the Nationalised Industries?**

The Tory attack on the nationalised industries is, of course, thoroughly unscrupulous, full of detailed misrepresentation and evasion. Such campaigns always are. It is not difficult for anti-Tory speakers to show that the coal-mines were more inefficient under private ownership, that the airlines were lavishly subsidised before nationalisation, that the railways always gave poor service under the old owners. But the Labour movement has nothing to gain, electorally or otherwise, by a back-to-the-wall defence of the record of existing nationalised industries, though we should strongly resist any attempt to hand them back.

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The Tories realise, if Labour does not, that the misuse and perversion of the original aims of nationalisation has bred among many working people—for example railwaymen—a deep cynicism and apathy about any further measures of the kind. Few people are going to rush to the polls to have motor factories run the way airlines or gasworks or railways are now.

The demand for nationalisation of particular industries has, of course, been the traditional way in which, in the British Labour movement, the Socialist aspirations of the members have been expressed. This is why it has never been possible for the right-wing leaders to get rid of nationalisation altogether from the Labour programme; and it is also why the Tories and employers oppose it. But the isolated nationalised industries as we see them today cannot be expected to bring even a foretaste of the gains of Socialism. The Acts establishing their control were designed by a Government concerned to interfere as little as possible with the smooth working of the capitalist system as a whole and to do full justice to the former owners' claims. And even this form of nationalisation, working for a decade or more within a private profit-making economy, has been not merely encroached on and eroded but financially milked by the big capitalist interests.

## Management

To try to contrast the management of these industries sharply and favourably with that of privately owned concerns is bound to be a futile exercise, since both are run and managed by essentially the same class of people with the same aims. This point is amply documented in a valuable recent study by Clive Jenkins, *Power at the Top* (McGibbon & Kee, 21s.), which analyses in detail the membership of all the boards of nationalised industries with the former directorships and interests of board members, and shows how the proportion of trade union and technical members has declined, while the influence of big business, especially in the form of part-time directors who spend most of their time running private capitalism, has been gradually increasing until it is overwhelming.

> "As a result of initial Labour hesitancy and determined Conservative Whipmanship the Boards have a membership which is virtually indistinguishable from the boards of directors running great commercial undertakings" (*Power at the Top*, p. 23).

The author tabulates the occupational background of board members of the principal public corporations as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Total of members | 272 |
| Company directors | 106 |
| Regular officers | 5 |
| Senior Central or Local Government officers | 15 |
| Representatives of Labour, Trade Union or Co-operative movements | 47 |
| Technical or Professional Managers | 71 |
| Landowners or Farmers | 9 |
| Universities, Voluntary Organisations, etc. | 19 |

This class outlook has shaped the decisions and policies of the industries concerned, so that, to quote again from Clive Jenkins (himself a Labour Councillor as well as a trade union official):

> "By 1956 it had become clear that the nationalised industries operating within the framework of a last-stage metropolitan capitalism were contributing to the unbalanced distribution of incomes in British society. . . . It is clear that many of the activists within the Labour Party expected the nationalised industries to become popular instruments of social change. However, in a setting of growing oligopolisation in manufacturing and distribution, coupled with deterioration of competition, the nationalised industries can be seen to have become an instrument in maintaining the frozen class structure of British society" (p. 21).

## The F.B.I.'s Arguments—and the Answer

At the end of 1958 the Federation of British Industries published a report on Nationalisation, which presents the arguments of the anti-nationalisers on their most reasonable and theoretical level. It does not propose the denationalisation of any existing nationalised industries (except civil air transport), but it comes out strongly against further nationalisation, both the limited measures for steel and haulage proposed by the Labour Party in *Industry and Society* and the nationalisation of a much larger part of the economy, which (quoting the Victory for Socialism pamphlet, *Industry your Servant*) it rightly concludes is still the desire of large sections of the Labour movement.

In deriding the case for nationalisation and extolling private enterprise, the report relies mainly on the promise and performance of the industries already nationalised. Its main arguments are:

1. The nationalised industries as a whole make losses, and certainly none make large profits.
2. They do not cover capital expenditure out of their own reserve funds, but borrow from the Government or from private investors.
3. Labour relations have not become better, but in some ways worse.

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4. Consumers' interests have not been safeguarded.
5. Parliament has not been able to control these industries effectively.
6. Nationalisation has not led to efficiency.
7. Nationalisation, though advocated as a means to aid central economic planning, does not do so "in a substantially free economy".

Clive Jenkins's book brings together ample material to show that these defects are due not to Socialist nationalisation, but to a form of nationalisation which was always designed to fit in unaggressively with capitalism, and which has been continuously and increasingly exploited by big business for its own profit.

Take the allegation that the nationalised industries have failed to make profits. Of course they have. To begin with these industries were loaded with a huge interest burden because of the heavy compensation paid to former owners, and this was a first charge on them, whether they made profits or not. Then they were required to sell their products cheap to private industry, and prevented by Government action on prices from accumulating reserves for investment, so that their competitors, where they had any, were always better placed. For capital development they therefore had to borrow from the Government, instead of using their own reserve funds to finance much of it, as a private concern would. And after all that, here is the interest these "unprofitable" industries managed to pay out for the benefit of private capitalists in the year 1958 alone—partly as interest on compensation to former owners, partly on the new capital investment needed to modernise the industries taken over:

| | *£ million* |
|---|---|
| Coal | 32 |
| Transport | 60 |
| Electricity | 53 |
| Gas | 20 |
| B.O.A.C. | 2 |
| B.E.A. | 1 |
| | £168 million |

Indeed, as Clive Jenkins shows, "the companies which lost their ailing interests in the basic industries have now become, in many cases, powerful and influential investment trusts which by virtue of their investments in the expanding industries are now more financially viable than ever before" (p. 25). Thomas Tilling Ltd., formerly a bus and tram combine, is an outstanding example; Powell Duffryn Ltd., which went from mining into coal distribution and export, is another.

Perhaps the most notorious example (elaborated by Clive Jenkins, pp. 123-127) is coalmining. Here, the owners were paid most generously for their obsolescent and neglected industry (the annual interest burden for compensation alone is £13 million), even though it was necessary, according to a board member, to do forty years' worth of development, including arrears, in the first ten years of nationalisation.

However, the industry was not allowed to finance this by charging private industry an economic price for coal throughout the ten years of coal shortage. Instead, it was compelled to sell to private firms £1 a ton below the world price, and even to import dear American coal and resell it to industry at the cheaper British price, as a result of which the Board made losses of £72 million on imported coal. After eleven years of boom the industry faces the slump with an accumulated "deficit" of £28 million (which has been deliberately used to hold the miners' claims in check), with no large visible reserves, and has to borrow capital from the Government at 5-5¾ per cent for modernisation. The annual interest burden is now £23 million—over 2½ times the average profit made by the old owners—and rising all the time.

Similarly on British Transport, the average revenue for the five pre-war years was £34.5 million. By 1957 the interest burden (interest on compensation and on the vast sum needed for modernisation) had risen to almost £60 million a year; and there was an accumulated "deficit" of £63.5 million. This financial position was used to justify wages and conditions on the railways which are considerably worse than in most other industries.

## Private Capitalism

Tracing the record of each nationalised industry, Clive Jenkins gives detailed examples to show how private capitalism has prevented the industry from being run efficiently in the public interest. He is especially good on the airlines, of whose dealings he has much direct experience. He shows how the B.O.A.C. board, for example, is dominated by big banks like Erlangers and Morgan Grenfells, with interests in other sides of air and sea transport, and by the shipping interests; and how private airlines and shipping lines have been systematically allowed and encouraged by the Government to take an increasing share of the most profitable traffic, leaving the nationalised lines to run the unprofitable routes. He shows, too, how arrogant and dictatorial these big business directors have been in their dealings with the unions.

On the railways, one of the most profitable

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sides has always been the supply of the vast quantity of equipment needed, as distinct from railway operation itself. Clive Jenkins shows that a number of British Transport Area Board members are connected with firms trading with the British Transport Commission, some of them very heavily. Allegations were made in 1957 by a former Production Adviser to the B.T.C., that there was waste and non-competitive tendering in the purchase of capital goods—ships, locomotives, signalling equipment and so on. These were investigated on the Government's behalf by Sir Harold Howarth, a distinguished accountant; his report is instructive:

> "It has been suggested to me that contracts of the nature involved must, on occasion, lead to an element of entertaining, and that personal relationships with old and tried friends must have their influence on the placing of orders, but this is so in many walks of life. I have asked the Chairman if he thinks it applies to an abnormal extent in the Commission, and he assures me that he does not think so."

In short, if the ship-building, electrical engineering and loco-building firms get contracts at monopoly prices by being on the Boards, it doesn't much matter—for the same thing used to happen on the old boards of the non-nationalised railways. It is standard capitalist procedure, and why should a nationalised industry try to improve on that? Moreover, under this regime more and more of the work of large-scale modernisation is being handed out to private firms instead of being done on a large scale in the Commission's own workshops. The same principle applies in the electrical, gas and mining industries.

The "efficiency" argument really boils down to this—in whose interest is industry to be efficient? If it is to be a docile (and so far efficient) source of profit for big business, it cannot also give efficient service to the consumer.

It is odd to find the F.B.I. listing lack of public accountability to Parliament as one of the defects of nationalised industries. "Parliament has not been able to devise methods for bringing them effectively to account: the Parliamentary system is unsuitable for the effective control of industry." Actually, not the technique but the will to control them has been lacking, and that not only by the Tories but by the Labour Governments, as Clive Jenkins shows with illuminating quotations.

> "I . . . hope that Parliament will not . . . seek to bring this great business too meticulously under political control. . . . In essence it should be a business undertaking."
>
> (Herbert Morrison on civil aviation, quoted p. 30.)

Indeed, the Labour Ministers deliberately cut down Parliament's rights in this respect. As the Speaker said (7th June, 1948):

> "The Government, in their desire not to interfere in the day-to-day activities of the boards of nationalised industries, have by what might be termed a self-denying ordinance refused to answer many questions on subjects which, by a strict interpretation of the statutes, might be held to be within their responsibility" (Jenkins, p. 30)

Of course, when leading F.B.I. members, like Sir Alexander Fleck, chairman of Imperial Chemical Industries, are asked to advise the Government on the working of nationalised industries, they show even greater concern than Mr. Morrison does to avoid "political" (or trade union) interference with the running of these corporations. But any stick is good enough to beat a dog with: especially if the dog is chained up and muzzled. In fact, the right-wing Labour leaders, like the Tories, are afraid of Parliamentary information and discussion lest it should lead to more pressure by the working class and trade unions for the Boards to be run in their interests and not on normal capitalist business lines.

The trade union movement is engaged from time to time in a soldier's war to improve this or that aspect of the nationalised industries—to secure more trade union and Labour influence on the Boards; to make the Government responsible for the payment of compensation and not the industry; to secure capital for development at cheap, non-market rates; to resist the encroachment of big business on the nationalised field. But it cannot alone alter the fundamentals.

### The Need to Extend Nationalisation

The overwhelming argument for nationalisation remains that only when the main commanding heights of industry are controlled by a socialist state does it become possible to plan production as a whole to meet the people's needs and make full use of national resources. Nationalisation of a handful of industries, whether because they were going bankrupt or because they were utilities needed to serve firms in private hands, does not open these possibilities and is thus something different, not only in extent but in kind.

The F.B.I. report, indeed, recognises this. "One of the leading arguments in support of nationalisation is that it facilitates the planning of the whole economy. . . . Now there is clearly one kind of planning well suited to this argument. A totalitarian state will no doubt find it convenient, if not essential, to own and operate the greater part of industry. But such governmental planning

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as can be applied in a substantially free society without undermining it is not in fact made easier by state ownership of industry (apart from public utilities)."

"A substantially free society" is, of course, a capitalist society; and as long as the economy is to be capitalised, it is argued, "the Government is likely to achieve as much or more by influencing, assisting and co-operating with the activities of private firms as by directives to the nationalised Boards." Not even the F.B.I. can deny that if people want a fundamentally different, a planned economy, it has to be based on nationalisation, however "totalitarian" such a denial of the freedom of big business may be.

What is happening today in the coalfields rams this lesson home. Here we see pits closed, miners out of work, stocks piling up at the pithead, and Britain's one important home-produced raw material running to waste. On the other side, the nationalised power-stations are burning increased quantities of imported oil, which costs them at least as much as coal would do and which they are tied to use more of under long-term contracts: and the nationalised gas industry, as well as burning more oil, is investing in tankers to import liquid methane from the American oil companies. Instead of the great new coal-chemical plants envisaged by the miners' union before nationalisation, we see the Coal Board reducing its investment, cutting down production of by-products and closing plants, while the private oil trusts have been allowed to spend £240 million in the ten years to 1957 on refineries in Britain alone and have developed their oil-based chemical production without competition.

When the N.U.M. press for a planned national fuel policy, in which coal will occupy a key place, the Tories counter that in the interests of private industry there must be "free competition" between the different fuels—even though this makes them all dearer in the long run, and results in wasted resources and the heavy social and human cost of unemployment and workless villages. The real reasons are plain enough. The oil companies, which are a stronghold of capitalist profit, must be favoured at the expense of nationalised industry. Long-term contracts with oil combines and opencast contractors, extracted by them in a sellers' market in the years of coal famine, must at any cost be honoured, though all the pledges to the miners about steady employment are dishonoured. And private firms must be allowed to choose whichever fuel seems most immediately profitable to them, whatever it may cost the nation when the demand for fuel once again rises and the pits and miners to supply it are not available. In fact, because of capitalist pressure not even the nationalised industries themselves can be planned.

The breakdown of long-term planning in the fuel industries as a whole, however, brings us to a still more fundamental point. In the last resort it is the stagnation in industrial production which has led to a decline in the demand for all fuels, and thus to sharpened competition between them. Instead of the 3 per cent per annum expansion of output promised by the Tories, and taken as a rough estimate for guiding these industries (a level of output which would have required all the fuel we produce and more), there has been (in the normal course of unplanned production, capitalist slump and Tory restrictive policies) a three-year standstill or worse, which has thrown out all the estimates of planners in the nationalised boards, and has led the oil industry to cut fuel-oil prices even below cost in order to break into fresh markets.

Under "totalitarian"—that is, Socialist—planning, this could not and did not happen. There may, of course, be mistakes even there in estimating what will be needed from this or that industry; and technical changes influence plans in Socialist countries, much more rapidly than they do under capitalism. But the essential difference is that under Socialism total production and the standard of life are continuously rising in a foreseeable way. In the Soviet Union, where both oil and coal are home-produced fuels, the Seven-Year Plan provides for an increase of coal production by 20-23 per cent—an increase of 100 million tons—*at the same time* as oil is to expand by 120 million tons, or more than double, and electricity by 100-120 per cent. And not even the F.B.I.—convinced at last by the logic of the sputniks—can have much doubt that these plans will be achieved or exceeded.

Thus the most fundamental trouble with our nationalised industries is that they are, and as far as Labour's official policy goes are intended to continue, a minor part of an economy run for private profit. In such an economy the nationalised industries, even if they had managers less personally involved in big business than those in charge today, could not be an oasis of planned peace and stability, with output steadily rising, and workers feeling they were democratically taking their share in running the enterprise. This is why labour relations remain basically unchanged. A greater say for the workers in management, a sense that they are working on behalf of the whole community, cannot be achieved by changes in the membership of the Boards alone, even if some directors were elected by the workers as Clive Jenkins proposes, but only by a change in

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the central state power. Only when the Labour movement can bring into power a Government with a determined Socialist policy will the worker in nationalised industry be able to transform his life and his work.

### What Nationalisation Could Mean

The key question, after all the exposure, is—what next? What constructive alternative can the Labour movement put forward to inspire renewed faith and confidence in the new generation, those of the Aldermaston and June 28th marches, who are beginning to search for a Socialist answer? On this side Clive Jenkins's book, for all its excellent documentation, has little to offer, beyond some suggestions about the desirable relations between trade unions and management in a nationalised industry.

First of all, instead of defending the (often indefensible) record of nationalised industry, the Labour movement needs to take the offensive and show up the Tory claim for modern capitalism as the supreme way of giving the individual human being what he wants in life. We need to show not only how industry has stagnated under private monopoly and youth lacks an outlet for its skill and energy, but even more how capitalism is wasting and destroying the chance of a new, longer and happier life that science today makes possible. A job with wages is something better than many workers had in the 1930's, all right—and even that is more than we shall have if British capitalism goes on in its present ways. But our young people want more, and are entitled to more.

They want, and they could have, complete freedom from the fear of nuclear war. They want a full all-round education for all, leading to a skilled, interesting and worth-while job—no more drudgery, at work or in the home. They want to live in cities that are clean and spacious, and as beautiful as the best of the old civilisations, not deserts of blackened brick and concrete; to have the leisure and opportunity to create and to enjoy fine things in nature and the arts. At work they want to be treated as human beings, not "hands". They want their chance to understand and add to the heritage of science and technique, to help extend man's mastery over squalor and disease and death. And all this requires a Socialist economy. Nothing is more insulting to the working class than the belief that because most of the young are at present allowed to go to the factory for eight hours a day and many families have television, "you can't expect them to be Socialists like their fathers were."

The case for nationalisation is therefore the Socialist case. A Labour Government with Socialist aims, that wants to do away with exploitation and poverty, will have to change the present form of nationalisation and to extend nationalisation or public ownership to *all* the commanding heights of the economy. The main gains from such nationalisation can be summarised:

1. *Planned industrial advance.* With national ownership of all large-scale enterprises, output and prices can be nationally planned to satisfy people's needs. Full use can therefore be made both of national resources (raw materials, land, power) and of technical and industrial skill. There will be no unemployment, and no need to fear technical change. With the 500 great monopolies brought under public ownership, the capitalists will no longer be in a position to prevent and undermine nationalised industry.

2. *Better conditions for the workers.* Cuts in the interest burden, which will be borne by the state, and interest-free loans to public industry, will make possible immediate improvements in wages and working conditions. Rapid technical change, made possible by the switch from armaments, will guarantee that such improvements can continue; and strong trade unions will ensure that the need for better wages and conditions is kept in the forefront of industrial planning. Although the unions will have the right to strike, there is likely, in these conditions, to be less need or inclination to use it.

3. *A great extension of democracy,* both at work and in general social life. The boards of nationalised industries will be made up solely of workers and technicians. The workers and their trade unions will have their say in management from top to bottom. Development plans and output targets will be put before the workers in every factory, pit and job for discussion and joint agreement.

Clive Jenkins in his book rightly stresses the fight already being made by the unions in nationalised industries for more status, information and consultation, to aid them in defending workers' interests. But it is obvious that fully effective joint consultation is only possible when there is a real overriding unity of interest between workers and management—as there was temporarily, and to a limited extent, during the war; as there will be on a far wider scale when *all* major industry produces only for the people's needs, and there is no exploiting class to consider, so that every rise in production will mean better earnings and a higher standard of life.

The main responsibility of our strong and experienced Trade Union movement will still be

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to protect the workers' interests, and the strength and vigilance of trade union and shop stewards' organisations will be the best guarantee against bureaucracy or injustice in the nationalised industries. Close control by Parliament, full information to Parliament on reports and plans, and the right of M.P.s to question Ministers on issues arising in nationalised industry will be a further safeguard for workers and consumers, which cannot be given up to allow managements a quiet life.

All this is familiar ground to workers who have studied *The British Road to Socialism*. But this programme is still too much the private property of the Communist Party. We need to get its main ideas understood and discussed throughout the Labour movement, so that cynicism and resentment can be changed into hard-headed enthusiasm. The T.G.W.U. conference shows how ready people are.

Some people may feel that it is too late to get the Labour Party to follow the lead of Frank Cousins and the T.G.W.U. and repudiate *Industry and Society* before the General Election; and that nothing constructive can therefore be achieved under a Labour Government if one is returned. This is not, I am convinced, how politics work. We don't have to wait for the Labour Government-after-next, with a full Socialist policy, to get the beginning of a change. Now, before the election, is the time to start to win understanding in the movement. If a Labour Government is returned, it will inevitably meet with Tory hostility (as well as hesitancy on its own side) about taking over steel and haulage, along with more demands from engineering and chemical workers for intervention in their industries, from railwaymen and electricians and transport workers and miners for the new deal they have so long been promised. Around these issues great discussions and struggles can generate the energy to carry the whole movement forward; and the outcome depends on how many people, above all how many young people, we convince that the fight for Socialism is worth while and can be won.

# Opera and Ballet

*Alan Bush*

*(Opening Statement for the Conference on Opera and Ballet organised by the Music Group of the Communist Party)*

"MUSIC began with singing." This early music-making was practised by primitive man with an unbounded enthusiasm and devotion. For tribal society music was no part-time hobby for leisure hours. It organised the activity and moulded the feelings of all members of the tribe, and thus united them against their enemies, the weather and the fierce animals whose prey they were. The dramas of their songs and dances were literally matters of life and death, closely bound up with the experiences and actions of their struggle for existence.

Folk songs and especially work songs, such as shanties and reaping and spinning songs, have preserved through the ages something of the immediacy of this primitive tribal music. Nowadays, in our public musical world, it is in opera that its nearest equivalent is to be found. Even the present-day singer of a folk-ballad does not enact the story of the ballad, he relates it in song form. But in opera we experience again the force of music wedded to human action. It is the form which most immediately and completely reflects human life with its hopes, struggles, defeats and victories.

In *The British Road to Socialism*, the official programme of the Communist Party, the following appears:

> "Our great cultural heritage has to become the property of the people. This means that every encouragement and material assistance needed is given to science, art, literature, music, drama, the cinema, sport and all other social activities that can help the all-round development of people and enrich their lives and leisure."

From what has been said already it follows that the support that the Communist Party pledges to art which enriches human life should include as one of the first priorities support for opera.

Now opera is a very expensive form of artistic activity. It has never paid for itself at any period or in any country, but has always been subsidised from national, local or individual sources. The Royal Opera, Covent Garden, up to 1946 was

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subsidised by the British aristocracy and wealthy capitalists.

The first instance of state support for opera in Britain took place when the Labour Government of 1929-31 granted a subsidy to the British National Opera Company. With the defection of MacDonald, Thomas and Snowden and the advent of the National Government, the subsidy was discontinued and the B.N.O.C. was forced into bankruptcy. In 1940 the Council for the Encouragement of Music and Art was set up, which administered funds for the support of music and drama, including opera. This organisation gave place in 1946 to the Arts Council of Great Britain, which administers for art, drama and music a Treasury grant, amounting in 1957-58 to £985,000. The responsibility for the administration of this grant lies entirely with the Arts Council, and the constitution and policy of the Council are therefore matters of very great importance.

The Royal Charter of August 1946 which set up the Arts Council defines its objects as "the development of a greater knowledge, understanding and practice of the Fine Arts, in particular to increase the accessibility of the Fine Arts to the public throughout Our Realm, to improve the standard of execution of the Fine Arts and to advise and co-operate with our government departments, local authorities, etc."

## "Few, but roses"

In the Arts Council annual report for 1955-56, it was stated that:

> "The primary responsibility imposed on the Council by its Charter is to preserve and improve standards of performance in the various arts, and that the Council interpreted this injunction in relation to its income as implying the support of a limited number of institutions where exemplary standards may be developed."

This policy was summed up by the Arts Council as "Few, but roses." Its implementation resulted in the closing down of many theatres and orchestras in various parts of the country.

The Communist Party repudiates this attitude of the Arts Council. In *The British Road to Socialism* the Party policy is defined as follows:

> "The aim must be to give everyone access to humanity's rich store of learning and the arts."

The Party insists that the Arts Council should carry out the terms of its charter without arbitrarily selecting the second of the three methods laid down to the complete disregard of the first.

The unacceptable policy of "Few, but roses" has, however, been recently supplemented by a still more dangerous tendency. The official 13th Annual Report of the Arts Council for 1957-58 is entitled on its cover "A New Pattern of Patronage". From this it is clear that the present policy of the Arts Council, instead of concentrating on a fight for increased grants, is to rely upon "the hope that a third force of patronage is now emerging". To quote:

> "A welcome development since the war has been the support the Arts are deriving from business firms. Sometimes these industrial patrons are, very properly, able to debit their donations to the prestige-advertising of their ware or to their firm's welfare fund; sometimes they are generous enough, with the concurrence of their shareholders, to make a large contribution from taxed profits. The support of a large firm has a substantial value, moral as well as financial, for a local activity such as an orchestra, a repertory theatre or an annual festival of the arts."

Further:

> "It is vital that patronage should retain its individuality and that industrial patrons, especially, should make their own choice of beneficiaries."

The policy of the Arts Council in this new situation is to maintain its present amount of support, but not energetically to strive for its increase. This is evident from the following:

> "If a new and independent body of patronage is thus to develop, the present practitioners of that function must play fair. Nothing could be more disastrous than for a municipality to diminish its subsidies to the arts because a regional TV company was lending a hand, or for a government to contract out of any of its present modest obligations to the Arts because reinforcements have arrived from elsewhere."

These are excerpts from the general introduction of the official yearbook of the Arts Council for 1957-58, signed by its Secretary-General, Sir William Emrys Williams, C.B.E. It is difficult to see how anybody could seriously speak of "moral value" in connection with the financial support of the arts by a large firm out of funds allocated to its prestige advertising, especially when the firm in question is to make its own choice of beneficiaries. Yet the Secretary-General of the Arts Council asks us to welcome as progress this prospect of a few roses in the garden of the arts being artificially fertilised by I.C.I.

There is no reason to repudiate contributions from this Third Force of Patronage, providing no strings are attached. But this proviso is specifically nullified by the quotation previously given, to the effect that "industrial patrons, especially, should make their own choice of beneficiaries". Even if, in some cases, they have no special beneficiaries whose interests they wish to further, big firms would be bound to direct their influence against

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opera houses under their patronage putting on works whose tendency is to criticise the present capitalist system. The reasons they would give for their opposition would, of course, purport to be purely aesthetic; they would argue that art should be free—free, that is to say, from the material aspects of life, so as to concern itself exclusively with higher things, with moral and spiritual conflicts within the individual, conflicts unfolding and resolving on a plane abstracted from the arena of oppression, privilege and corruption which are the inescapable features of life in capitalist society today. This influence of big business would be exercised most strongly in times of social and economic crisis, at precisely those times when works critical of the established social order would make their maximum effect.

*Thus we should never approve of the Third Force of Patronage as a substitute for national or municipal subsidies.* If more money is required, as it certainly is, it is from the Treasury and the local authorities and not from big business that it should come.

The weakness of the Arts Council as at present constituted to organise and develop opera in Britain was strikingly displayed in the crises which, in the spring of 1958, beset all the three professional opera companies of Britain, Covent Garden, Sadler's Wells and the Carl Rosa. This crisis was widely reported in the press. British Actors' Equity Association moved the following resolution at the 1958 Trades Union Congress:

> "This Trades Union Congress expresses its alarm at recent threats to the continued existence of important national organisations providing opera, ballet and drama with assistance from public funds. Congress believes that the method of appointment of the trusts or boards responsible for the policy and administration of such organisations is in need of review with a view to their being made publicly accountable for their actions. Congress is further of the opinion that those who are responsible to the public for creation and performance should be represented through their trade unions on all such trusts and boards."

This resolution was remitted to the General Council for consideration.

## Subsidies

The subsidies received by Covent Garden, Sadler's Wells and the Carl Rosa for the season of 1957-58 were £302,000, £142,000 and £63,500 respectively. The immediate cause of the crisis was due to the demand by the Treasury that the overdrafts which Sadler's Wells and the Carl Rosa had accumulated through overspending during the previous three years, and which had piled up to £46,000 and £17,000 respectively, must begin to be reduced. The Treasury proposed that out of the grants for the 1957-58 season, £10,000 must go towards liquidating these overdrafts.

To deal with this situation the Arts Council proposed a form of merger between the two companies; this was accepted by the Sadler's Wells and Carl Rosa Trusts, but rejected by the staff of Sadler's Wells. The Director, the Musical Director and the General Manager all resigned, thus bringing the crisis into the open. £35,000 was required by Sadler's Wells to enable it to continue until the end of the present 1958-59 season, and this money was raised from individuals and local authorities. In order to enable Sadler's Wells to carry on from the end of the current season, and following an enquiry set up by the L.C.C., the General Purposes Committee of the L.C.C. is recommending that a grant of £35,000 annually for three years, and £15,000 towards immediate improvements, should be made.

Shortly after the crisis of March, 1958, disputes broke out within the management of the Carl Rosa. The Arts Council had appointed Professor Proctor-Gregg director of the company. As a result of the disagreements, he and Sir Donald Wolfit, together with three other members of the Board of Management, resigned. The Arts Council then withdrew its support from the Carl Rosa, and they formed a new company called Touring Opera 1958, which included the great majority of the principals, chorus and orchestra of the Carl Rosa Company—all in fact who wished to join—causing the remainder of that company, which had brought opera to the provinces for over eighty years, to find itself in abeyance. The Arts Council issued a statement on December 29th, 1958, entitled "Success of Touring Opera". A 12-week autumn tour in provincial cities had taken place with nearly 70 per cent capacity houses, the takings being higher than those in the Carl Rosa tour the previous autumn. In March, 1959, Touring Opera 1958 became a part of Sadler's Wells, which, from that date, administered two complete opera companies, each with its own orchestra and full staff. These two companies share between them three different enterprises in the field of opera and operetta:

(1) Sadler's Wells Theatre opera seasons;
(2) Operetta at the London Coliseum;
(3) Opera in the provinces.

The original Sadler's Wells company has been playing operetta at the London Coliseum this summer and will tour the provinces in the autumn for four weeks and will return to Sadler's Wells Theatre in mid-October, remaining there until

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next Easter. The new company, having toured in the provinces from March till June, opened with operetta at the London Coliseum on July 9th till the end of November; it will tour again in the provinces in the New Year. Thus this reconstruction results each year in two operetta seasons at the London Coliseum and six months' opera at Sadler's Wells Theatre, together with about sixteen weeks' touring in the provinces, which, with a possible six weeks from Covent Garden, makes a total of 22 weeks in all in the provincial cities. The result of the reconstruction has been in effect to supply London with two long seasons of operetta, the main object being box office receipts. This is a further measure of centralisation. The amount of opera in the provinces remains at a lower level than before the Arts Council withdrew support from the Carl Rosa: twenty-two weeks' opera for a score of cities of half-a-million inhabitants or more, which works out at one and a-half weeks in 52 on the average. For the great majority of people living in Britain this means in practice no opera at all for years at a time.

The management of the Carl Rosa has recently announced that the company will tour the provinces in the autumn and spring; an appeal has been launched to the Third Force of Patronage. In view of the meagre fare provided for the provinces by the Arts Council this is to be welcomed, if only as a temporary stop-gap, until such time as the provincial demand is adequately supplied by national and municipal action.

### No Trace of Democracy

In criticising the policies and effectiveness of the Arts Council, we must not overlook the fact that there are no doubt many people within the Council who deplore the measures to which it has, they believe, been driven because of the small amount of money made available by the Government. The policy adopted, however, is to no small extent a reflection of the bureaucratic constitution of the Arts Council. The sixteen or less members of the Arts Council are appointed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer after consultation with the Minister of Education and the Secretary of State for Scotland. These appointed Arts Council members themselves appoint persons to serve on advisory panels. There is thus no trace of democracy in the constitution or administration of the Arts Council. We would fight for a change in the constitution of the Arts Council, as a result of which representatives of professional artists, actors and musicians and of amateur bodies, and also perhaps of important local authorities, would be elected to the Arts Council to sit alongside those members appointed by the Government. (Amateur activity is responsible for a substantial proportion of the operatic, musical and dramatic performances given in Britain at the present time.)

The crisis of 1958 brought the whole problem of opera in Britain into the public eye. It did not leave the position of Covent Garden untouched. Martin Cooper, music critic of the *Daily Telegraph,* headed an article in that paper of March 8th, 1958, as follows:

> "It is the Covent Garden situation that needs immediate investigation. Nothing but harm can be done by amalgamating the junior Companies (Sadler's Wells and the Carl Rosa) and allowing the chief recipient of state aid to go on as it is."

The threatened bankruptcy of Covent Garden has been averted by the success of Mr. David Webster in securing an additional subsidy of £200,000 per annum for three years; in these circumstances the "chief recipient of state aid" can indeed "go on as it is". Yet there is much truth in Mr. Martin Cooper's remark. The administration of Covent Garden is unique among the opera houses of the world, one could say fortunately for the rest of the world. The national opera house of Great Britain has no artistic director and no musical director. The General Administrator is assisted in his deliberations by a Board of twelve Directors, only two of whom, Sir Thomas Armstrong and Mr. Walter Legge, are concerned with music in a professional capacity. A change of policy has made itself painfully apparent during the past two years. From its inception in 1946 Covent Garden distinguished itself most honourably for ten years by its considerable number of first performances of operas by British composers. This situation appears to have changed entirely. During the 1957-58 season 158 performances of twenty-one different operas were given; only one opera, given five performances, was by a British composer; this was Benjamin Britten's *Peter Grimes.* During this season the sum of £52,607 was spent on three opera productions, two of the classical operas *The Trojans* and *Aida,* and one by a living French composer, Poulenc's *The Carmelites.* An even worse record has been shown in the current season, when a pronounced emphasis on star performances has shown itself. Prices are very high. Furthermore, a new premium on privilege has been introduced. To quote from the June issue of *Music and Musicians*:

> "In essence the plan is to give to companies rich enough to spend £500 on a stall or £1,500 on a box the privilege of buying for this sum a year's renewable ownership of certain seats in the opera house, to the exclusion of those seats from the booking normally available to the public. . . . Covent Garden is not a private

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> concern. It is a public institution supported by public funds. It is our National Opera, and every seat in it should be open to every citizen who has the price in his hand, a price kept at a reasonable level by public grants . . . privilege based on wealth is a bad thing. When applied by an institution which owes its existence to public funds it should be discouraged and condemned."

Mr. David Webster, in a speech to the recent conference of the National Council of Music, said that in his opinion the price of seats was still too low. He has so far refused to consider the possibility of monthly season tickets at reduced rates, a practice almost universal in Continental opera houses.

### Enquiry into Covent Garden

We put forward for discussion the idea of an immediate enquiry into the policy and methods of administration of Covent Garden.

*One important and basic aspect of our policy must be to make opera accessible to all the people* of this country, wherever they live, as far as this is practicable. As has been already explained, provincial cities are only visited occasionally by Covent Garden, or by one or other of the Sadler's Wells companies. This is totally inadequate. The problem can only be solved by the establishment of permanent opera houses in some of the largest provincial cities, probably Manchester, Glasgow, Cardiff and Birmingham. These opera houses would receive annual subsidies, as Sadler's Wells and Covent Garden do now, from which organisations they would, however, be entirely independent. Such opera houses could also house ballet, operetta and drama companies. *Work on one such opera house should be made an immediate priority.* The monopoly in our operatic life of Covent Garden and Sadler's Wells can only be overcome by one or more independent theatres with comparable financial backing. Provincial opera houses would provide opportunities for singers, conductors and producers which are sorely needed, and without which further development in Britain is impossible. They would provide a healthy counterblast to the Olympian complacency of both Covent Garden and Sadler's Wells, whose repertoire is open to serious objections and whose standard of performance is often mediocre. The importance of provincial opera houses, subsidised by Arts Council and local municipal grants (never mind about the Third Force), cannot be exaggerated.

The development of opera and ballet in Britain requires proper training. The opera and ballet schools at present functioning receive no state support. There are opera classes at the main music schools, but they only function alongside the general curriculum and provide no training in opera production or conducting. The problems of opera production can be studied nowhere in Britain; no wonder that so many opera productions suffer and some operas are wrecked by amateurish producing. We would support subsidies for opera and ballet schools.

At present little attention is paid or support given by the Arts Council to amateur opera productions. The number of amateur societies throughout the country is very large and forms a most important field of work. By the Arts Council with its present policy these societies are treated more as weeds than roses. We would give every encouragement to such activities, as they will be for many years to come an important means of bringing opera to the more inaccessible parts of the country.

Opera and ballet are now beginning to be developed in some schools. Here the range of achievement is very wide; some schools give remarkably fine performances, while others do nothing. We would do everything to encourage efforts of this kind.

### Labour and Tory Policies

The unsatisfactory position of opera and ballet in Britain has been discussed by various sections of the working-class movement. The resolution remitted by the 1958 T.U.C. to the General Council has already been mentioned.

The Entertainment Arts Socialist Association, an organisation whose aim is to advise the Labour Party on its policy for the arts, presented a report in January of this year in which the following objectives were put forward:

> "that it should be a function of national or local government to see that people resident in all but the most remote parts of Britain should have a reasonably regular opportunity of seeing first class theatre, and that in all the larger centres there should be varied theatre fare, including regular performances of the classics, opera and ballet."

Among the immediate proposals are the following:

> "(*a*) The Arts Council should have increased grants, but this should be conditional on some changes of structure and of terms of reference. Some greater degree of democracy has been strongly suggested."

There are even stirrings within the Conservative Party. The Bow Group (bow from bow and arrow, not from Stratford-atte-Bow) has prepared a pamphlet on *Patronage and the Arts,* which included the following recommendations:

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> "The total level of State Patronage through both the Arts Council and the British Council needs to be raised and grants should be made on a triennial or longer basis. . . .
>
> "The Government should assume financial responsibility for national institutions of opera, ballet and drama."

Local authorities are encouraged to support the arts to a far greater extent than they have so far done. Furthermore:

> "A provincial base for opera is desirable, and the efforts being made for this deserve encouragement.
>
> "The National School of Opera deserves financial help from the Central Government."

It is impossible to assess what effective influence, if any, either of these organisations can exercise on the Labour and Conservative Parties respectively. In any case their very existence shows how widespread is the public demand for opera and ballet; and as further awareness of this demand grows, there may well arise within the rival parties the realisation that some effective response to this demand must be manifested by them, even if only for election purposes.

It is perhaps not without significance that neither the social democratic nor the Tory organisation mentions the conditions of employment of principals, chorus, ballet, orchestra or stage-hands. Considerable improvements have been gained during the last few years by chorus members, in some cases by means of strike action. Even so Sadler's Wells chorus members only earn £13 10s. per week, with two weeks in each year on half-pay. The orchestral players, thanks to the power and energy of the Musicians' Union, get upwards of £4 a week more than the chorus members. Principals are paid between £14 and £40 per week, but with several weeks out of work during each year. An extra touring allowance of £4 a week is payable to chorus, orchestra and some principals. At Covent Garden chorus members get 10s. a week more than at Sadler's Wells, and are on full pay throughout the year. The orchestral players also get a little more than at Sadler's Wells. The principals range from £20 to £75 per week. The touring allowance is paid to chorus and orchestra.

It is clear that the earnings of opera chorus members are extremely low by present standards, especially when the relatively short working life of an opera chorus singer is taken into consideration. We would support all efforts in favour of better conditions of employment for the chorus, orchestra and stage hands, which might be made by their trade unions or professional organisations.

### The Communist Party's Policy

To sum up, the Communist Party must have both a short-term and a long-term policy, the first for the immediate future, the latter to be put into operation by a Socialist Government.

Under the short-term policy fall the headings already touched upon. They are as follows:

> (1) changes in the constitution and policy of the Arts Council;
>
> (2) an investigation into the policy and methods of administration of the existing operatic and ballet companies which at present receive subsidies;
>
> (3) the immediate need for a new opera house in one of the large provincial cities;
>
> (4) subsidies for opera and ballet schools;
>
> (5) support and development of amateur opera and ballet;
>
> (6) support and development of opera and ballet in education.

The long-term policy would aim at the development of a much wider public for opera, and would give more consideration to the question of what sort of operas could best "help the all-round development of people and enrich their lives and leisure", to quote again from *The British Road to Socialism*.

The difficult position of opera and ballet in Britain is not only due to insufficient money being made available. In fact, the whole amount required to transform completely the present situation is trifling compared to the resources at Britain's disposal. Insufficient money is certainly one aspect of the problem, and more money must be allocated if progress is to be ensured for the future. But little progress and no increased service to the people in general will result from more money alone. For that all the various points outlined in this statement must be put into effect.

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# Democracy and Africa's liberation

*Idris Cox*

AFRICA is now in the top headlines of the press and journals of the whole world. It is a constant topic in radio talks and commentaries, and the theme of scores of new books which pour out on both sides of the Atlantic.

This is not surprising. The swift advance of the African liberation movements in recent years has dealt a shattering blow to the old concept of "darkest" Africa. Millions of Africans are engaged in a gigantic struggle for freedom. They have set the aim of breaking down the old artificial boundaries set up by the rival imperialist powers.

Their strategy is the united struggle of all African people, and their objective a community of free and independent African States. In the process of the African struggle new nations are being created, and linguistic communities separated under imperialist rule are being reunited in new conditions.

Asia is rich in the experience of national liberation struggles, anti-imperialist and anti-feudal in character. These are also the basic features in Africa, but with one important distinction. There was no developed feudal system in most parts of Africa, and consequently the agrarian problem takes on a different character from that of Asia. On the other hand, there does exist in some territories a European settler population which constitutes itself as a ruling class.

Taking the African continent as a whole there is a great unevenness in the stages of the national liberation struggle, and it still remains for Marxists to carry through an objective and up-to-date analysis of the distinctive features of the struggles now taking place.

The writings of Lenin, Stalin, and Mao Tse-tung serve as a valuable guide for this new study, but do not provide a ready-made solution. It was Stalin himself who emphasised that:

> "The solution of the national problem can be arrived at only if due consideration is paid to historic conditions in their development. The economic, political and cultural conditions of a given nation constitute the only key to the question of *how* a particular nation ought to arrange its life and *what forms* its future constitution ought to take. It is possible that a specific solution of the problem will be required for each nation. If, indeed, a dialectical approach to a question is required anywhere it is required here, in the national question."
>
> (Stalin: *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question*. 1935 Edition, Page 21.)

Indeed, the extent to which nations already exist in Africa, or are in the process of formation, is even now a subject of keen discussion among Marxists. But one thing is clear. In the process of the gigantic struggles now being waged in Africa new nations are being created. And though the stage reached varies from one territory to another, all of them form part of the mighty democratic movements which are sweeping forward in all parts of the continent.

## Imperialism and Democracy

Even before the African upsurge of recent years official Labour policy in Britain was vaguely aware that big changes were taking place. In 1943, under the impact of the Second World War, it was recognised that new problems would arise after the war.

In its 1943 declaration "Post-War Policy for African and Pacific Colonies" the official conception was that of "Colonies inhabited by backward peoples of primitive culture, the great majority of which are in Africa". It was claimed their economic and political systems were so backward that "they are not yet able to stand by themselves".

Two main principles were laid down for the African territories: (1) they should be administered by colonial powers "as a trust for the native inhabitants", and (2) the primary object being to train the native inhabitants "in the shortest possible time to govern themselves". The general approach was one of "gradual advance to self-government". Where Africans were "not yet capable of exercising a franchise, the members of the Legislative Council should be officials and nominated members". In the territories where there is a European minority "it is essential that an elected majority in the Legislative Council should *not* be introduced unless and until the

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natives can be given the franchise on the same terms as the European".

In actual practice, it was the Europeans who constituted the "officials and nominated members" of the Legislative Councils in these territories during the term of the post-war Labour Governments. So that instead of "trusteeship" it was European political domination!

In 1954 Labour's official statement "From Colonies to Commonwealth" laid down the main principles of its present declared policy. The first sentence reads:

> "The aim of Labour's policy for the Colonies is to enable them to achieve democratic self-government under conditions which ensure for their peoples both a fair standard of living and freedom from oppression from any quarter."

This was in essence identical with policy formulation outlined by the Labour Government in 1947, and to which the British Tories give their full support. It has, in fact, been taken over without question by the present Tory Government, and forms the first paragraph in the most recent Government publication "Britain's Purpose in Africa".

Policy declarations are one thing. How they are applied in practice is another. The road traversed from 1945 to 1951 by the two post-war Labour Governments is strewn with broken pledges in relation to the colonies, even with ruthless repressive measures and the use of armed force against colonial peoples who endeavoured to achieve the objectives set out in Labour's official policy declarations.

There was the despatch of armed forces in 1948 against the Malayan peoples, the shooting down of Nigerian coal miners in 1949, the repression and arrest of national leaders in the Gold Coast in 1950, the banishment of Seretse Khama, and the forcible suppression of strikes and arrest of trade union leaders in Kenya in 1950. The list is far too long to give in detail. And the Tory list of repressive measures is even longer—Malaya, Kenya, British Guiana, Uganda, Singapore, Tanganyika, and now Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia.

Both in theory and in practice the official Labour and Tory policy are in basic agreement. All the important changes in the relations between Britain and its colonies arise from what the colonial people *themselves* have achieved, together with the pressure of progressive opinion in Britain, and not as a result of a free political gift from British imperialism. Where it has been possible to do so, ruthless measures have been used to suppress the rising liberation movement. Where it has not been possible (or where blank refusal would lead to dangerous consequences) British imperialism has been forced to make reluctant political concessions—as in Ghana, Nigeria, Malaya, Singapore and elsewhere.

It seems clear that the political objective of both Tory and official Labour is to make concessions either to the feudal and reactionary elements (as in Malaya) or to the rising African national bourgeoisie (as in Ghana and Nigeria) who they believe can be won for co-operation with British imperialism. This does not mean they always succeed in achieving their objective—as shown in India's opposition to British foreign policy and the dilemma facing the British Tories as a result of the recent P.A.P. election victory in Singapore.

Nor does it mean that Labour's ranks are united behind the official colonial policy. Indeed, in recent years there is a growing healthy opposition arising within the organised Labour movement, and the initiative and pressure of the Movement for Colonial Freedom is making itself felt strongly, even on the Labour benches in the House of Commons. There is also a murmur of uneasiness in the ranks of the Tories—especially after the unsavoury revelations at the Hola camp in Kenya and the serious crisis which has been created for the future of the Federation in Central Africa.

All the same, the basic *aim* of both Tory and official Labour policy is to build up a political alliance with the reactionary feudal elements and those elements among the rising national bourgeoisie in the colonial countries ready and willing to co-operate with British imperialism. It has nothing in common with the extension of real democracy to the colonial peoples, for this would mean the end of colonial rule and exploitation—the beginning of the end of British imperialism.

The ruling class and its henchmen can never afford to declare openly its real aims, so the phrase "democracy" is a useful cover to cloak their real political aims. This is patently evident when we come to examine the nature of the national liberation struggle taking place in all parts of Africa.

## Is Democracy Something New for Africa?

The old ideas of Africa as a "dark" continent, "barbaric" and "uncivilised", are fast breaking down—though one should avoid the illusion they don't still exist widely among the British people, even among the working class. But new evidence is fast accumulating on the ancient kingdom civilisations which existed in different parts of Africa at a time when our forefathers were "barbarians" and uncivilised.

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One needs to be on guard against painting an idyllic picture of these ancient civilisations, for most of the people lived in extremely primitive conditions under a hierarchical ruling caste. At the same time, there is considerable evidence to prove there existed for centuries in many parts of Africa a form of tribal democracy which had no counterpart in this country.

This is now being recognised in surprising quarters. Lord Hailey, a well-known authority, spent many years making a thorough investigation of systems of local rule in tropical Africa. In his five volumes published in 1951 (revised after the 1940 edition) there is a wealth of useful information on this subject. The Preface (published as Part IV) points out that:

> "It is rare to find in British Colonial Africa any instance in which the indigenous form of rule previously in force could be described as autocratic."

On the contrary, it makes it clear that the individual tribal chiefs "had no machinery by the use of which they could enforce obedience to their orders". For ". . . in the last resort the real sanction lay in their ability to secure the acquiescence of their traditional advisers and ultimately of the *community* itself". [My emphasis.] What is more, the tribal community had the right to remove (or "de-stool") the chiefs.

Even Labour's official policy documents (though claiming to "extend" democracy to the Africans) have to admit that democratic forms existed in Africa long before imperialist rule:

> "It should also be realised that in many tribal systems there is a strong element of democracy, though it may take a different form from that to which we are accustomed in Britain. The tribal meeting, under varying forms and names, is usually an attempt to arrive at a genuine consensus of opinion. The object of such meetings is not to express majority and minority views, nor to achieve a majority government; but to secure the highest common factor of agreement among those taking part and to express this as a generally accepted view or decision which will then be supported by the entire tribe. Because this is different from most European practice, it has often been thought that tribalism is necessarily authoritarian; and this superficial judgment has caused much misunderstanding between Europeans and people living in tribal societies" (Labour's Colonial Policy—*Plural Society*, page 34).

Even the latest official Government publication *Britain's Purpose in Africa* has to recognise this. Speaking of the first British "administrators" sent to Africa it points out:

> "They also soon learned that in most cases tribal society was essentially democratic. The basis of tribal politics was always the village meeting, and all decisions were taken by the tribal council of Elders. The chief was a 'constitutional monarch'. He could seldom decide anything except on the advice of his council, which was itself closely bound by the will of the common people as expressed at village meetings" (pp. 10, 11).

Then after these wise words comes the "booby trap". The author, Kenneth Bradley (well-known exponent of the Colonial Office outlook), then remarks:

> "The British nation itself grew out of a tribal society not very different from this and the administrators began at once to lead the Africans along the old, familiar road" (pp. 10-17).

Even a child could answer that one! If the British "nation" grew out of similar conditions, who led them along the "familiar" road? And if they didn't need anyone to lead them, why should the Africans need anyone to lead them?

Of course, what really happened (and is still happening) is that British imperialist rule broke down the old tribal economy and proceeded to *destroy* these forms of tribal democracy. This was, and is still being done, by the method of "indirect rule". The essence of this is to take over the tribal system, *rob it of its democratic kernel*, and recruit the tribal chiefs and rulers as instruments of British imperialism.

It was not always an easy task. It was easier where the tribal authorities were already authoritarian and anti-democratic in character, as in Northern Nigeria. Where there were no natural tribal rulers (as in Eastern Nigeria) a system of warrant chiefs was created. In all cases where this method was successful the chiefs became salaried servants of British imperialism.

This was not achieved without a great deal of opposition. Even now there is a considerable body of chiefs in various African territories who participate with vigour in the struggle against British imperialism. It is certainly evident that the rising national liberation movement was strongly opposed to the whole system of "indirect rule". Lord Hailey himself recognised in his 1951 "Preface" that in Nigeria and the Gold Coast, the "advocates of this programme [national liberation] are in principle opposed to the present system of native administration".

In Kenya at this time, even in the Local Native Councils, Lord Hailey puts on record the growing tendency to regard the chiefs "as the representatives of official not of popular opinion". In East and West Nigeria they had become "the target for attack by the more progressive and politically minded elements in the community".

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## African Forms of Democracy

What emerges from all this is the fact that tribal forms of democracy *did* exist in Africa long before the British people were able to win substantial measures of democratic expression; and that it was British imperialist rule which *destroyed* early African forms of democracy in order to fasten its economic and political grip on the African peoples. All this serves to make nonsense of the official Labour and Tory boasts of "extending democratic rights" to the Africans.

At the same time, it doesn't follow that the old forms of tribal democracy would have remained were it not for the intervention of imperialism. It may well be that the transition from tribal economy to higher forms of economic development would also serve to undermine the old tribal forms of democracy. But it would have led to new forms of democratic expression *within the context of specific African conditions*—but none the less democratic for that.

While there is among the rising African national bourgeoisie a slavish acceptance of British forms of "democracy" there is also growing a strong critical opposition. Last March there was an interesting Seminar discussion on "Representative Government and National Progress" at Ibadan in Nigeria, sponsored by the Congress for Cultural Freedom and the University College of Nigeria. There were speakers present from several African territories—British, French and Belgian.

No attempt was made to reach final conclusions, but "it was clear that nobody wanted merely to take over institutions inherited from the colonising powers; everybody considered that there must be changes and adaptations and that newly independent African countries must not be expected to govern themselves in the images of the European powers" (*West Africa*, April 11th, 1959).

Much more forthright is the oft-repeated consistent viewpoint of President Sukarno of Indonesia, the essence of which is given in these extracts of his statement last April at the University of Istanbul:

> "We imitated the practice of Western countries in establishing a pattern of parliamentary liberal democracy which came straight from the textbooks of Western Europe and America. . . . We swallowed it and got violent indigestion. . . . The sickness grew worse, not better, and eventually it began to menace not only the health, but even the very life of the nation" (*World News*, May 23, 1959).

President Sukarno went on to explain that in Indonesia they had "forgotten the history, the culture, the social habits of our people". The idea of a majority and an opposition was alien to the Indonesian people:

> "Our nation, in its lower levels and echelons, in the villages and communities evolved, centuries ago, its own democratic methods. Rather than the idea democratic majority and opposition, our society had evolved for itself the ideas of democratic consultation and unanimity. . . .
>
> "Something had to be done. We had to apply our own system of democracy, which is in harmony with the character of our nation. . . . We had to make it possible for all sections of our society to participate in the function of government" (*World News*).

## Africa's New Fight for Democracy

It is with the advent of imperialist rule and exploitation that the African struggle has taken a new turn. To the extent that tribal society still exists the various tribes have come together in a common fight against imperialism. The shattering of tribal economy and the undermining of the old tribal society has given way to the rapid growth of a *national* outlook and formidable *national* movements. Even where tribal forms remain, they are not in opposition to the national movement, but often serve to strengthen it.

Of course, there is a vast contrast in the situation from one territory to another. In the absence of permanent European settlers in West Africa there were greater opportunities for the growth of an African national bourgeoisie. It's this class which heads the still growing national movement in Nigeria, Ghana, and Sierra Leone. Their main spokesmen are both in trading or small capitalist enterprises and outstanding leaders of the national intelligentsia. All the same, their *class* position is that of the rising national bourgeoisie who recognise the need to grasp political power for *themselves* to safeguard and to advance their own class interests as against those of British imperialism.

This could not be achieved without an appeal to the masses, the extension of the franchise, and the unleashing of mass opposition to the grip of foreign imperialism—even the use of socialist phrases. But because of their class position—desiring political power for themselves, but scared that the working class would advance to the leading position—they are unable and unwilling to wage an all-out battle to end all forms of imperialist rule and exploitation.

It is noticeable that in these West African territories the form of political independence achieved (due in Nigeria next year), as distinct from economic liberation, is in association and by agreement with the British Government. The economic grip of British imperialism is as strong

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as ever in these territories. This doesn't mean it will remain so, for the winning of political independence gives greater opportunities for the national movement to advance towards also winning economic liberation.

*What is a decisive factor in the new stage is the extent to which the working class will advance as the leading class force in the national liberation struggle, winning allies to its side in the common fight.*

In the territories of East Africa (Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika) and Central Africa (Nyasaland, Northern and Southern Rhodesia) there are important factors which are quite distinct from West Africa. In Kenya there is a European settler population of 50,000 which holds all the key positions in Kenya's economy and in the machinery of government. They represent the dominant *capitalist* class, closely allied with British overseas monopoly firms, and upon whom British imperialism largely depends for maintaining its grip in Kenya.

Though in comparison the European settler population in Uganda and Tanganyika is extremely small (most of the Europeans being colonial civil servants, advisers, technicians, etc.), they fall within the general pattern of British rule in East Africa. For if these two territories reached the position of having an elected African majority in the Legislative Councils the situation facing British imperialism in Kenya would be even more serious.

Very similar is the situation in Northern and Southern Rhodesia. Though the latter has had the constitutional status of a "self-governing colony" since 1923 its economy is still dominated by British, South African and U.S. capital; while the British Government still has the constitutional right to intervene against any legislation which discriminates against Africans—not that it has ever done so in the past thirty-six years! Nyasaland is in a similar position to Uganda and Tanganyika in that the European settler population is extremely small (370 Africans to one European), but with an African elected majority in the Legislative Council it would seriously endanger European minority domination in both Rhodesias.

This system of European minority rule in East and Central Africa, representing the dominant *alien* capitalist class, has hampered and limited the growth of an African national bourgeoisie. The result is that the workers and peasants are a stronger *leading* force in the growing national movements — though most of the prominent leaders come mainly from the professional classes.

Apart from their important military strategic position (Kenya being the most decisive) and the reliance of British imperialism on European minority domination, the *class* character of the leadership of the national movements in these territories makes it more difficult for the British ruling class to win them over to collaboration with British imperialism.

Indeed, the whole emphasis of the British ruling class in recent years is on the need to promote an African "middle class" (really an African bourgeoisie) in this region who would become more reliable allies of British imperialism. This was evident in the proposals of the East African Royal Commission Report in 1954—advocating a system of "land consolidation" which would enable land under tribal ownership to become a saleable commodity, and available for purchase by Europeans and more prosperous Africans. This process has since in fact developed considerably since 1954 throughout East Africa.

Similar steps are being taken to increase the salaries of the higher grades of African teachers and civil servants—all for the purpose of encouraging the growth of an African "élite" who would get the idea that co-operation with the Europeans would be more profitable for them. And to set a final seal on this new "recipe" for "partnership", African franchise rights have been deliberately contrived to cater for the better-off Africans and to exclude the great majority of the adult Africans.

These schemes are so complicated and varied in character that even their authors are often puzzled, and Government spokesmen give endless interpretations of the correct application. In a short space it's only possible to explain their essential character.

For all the six territories there are two electoral rolls, "ordinary" and "special". The highest qualifications needed are for the "general" roll, which means that 99 per cent out of every 100 who qualify are Europeans! Conditions for this roll vary from an annual income of £750 or ownership of property valued £1,500, to £480 annual income or £1,000 property plus primary education, and the lowest to £300 annual income or £500 property and four years' secondary education. It is easy to understand why so few Africans can qualify!

Conditions for the "special" roll vary from an annual income of £100 in Uganda to £150 (or £120 plus two years' secondary education) in the three territories of Central Africa. Even these conditions exclude all but the better-paid Africans (who are a small minority) from the roll. The proportion of Africans with the right to vote can be gathered from the latest available list of registered African electors:

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| | | *African population* |
|---|---|---|
| KENYA: | 126,508 | 1 in 50 |
| TANGANYIKA: | 29,00 | 1 in 280 |
| UGANDA: | 626,000 | 1 in 8 |
| NORTHERN RHODESIA: | 7,617 | 1 in 300 |
| SOUTHERN RHODESIA: | 960 | 1 in 2,500 |
| NYASALAND: | No elections | |

The strength of the African *national* opposition is revealed in the fact that even this small minority of eligible African electors gave their solid vote to those African candidates pledged to resist imperialism and European minority rule. If imperialist strategy cannot win over the better-off Africans there is little chance of swaying the African masses to accept the imperialist plan for "partnership".

### The New Situation in Africa

The events of the past year make it clear that the British ruling class are finding it more difficult than ever to hold back the rapid advance of the African liberation struggle. Formerly, the liberation struggle was being waged in different parts of Africa, separated in distance and in time one from the other.

The outstanding achievement of the All-African People's Conference at Accra last December was the concept of an all-African liberation struggle, leading to the creation of a "community of free, independent African States". That this was not merely a paper declaration is proved in the subsequent organised solidarity for the struggles in Kenya, Belgian Congo, Cameroons, Nyasaland, and the two Rhodesias. "An injury to one is an injury to all" is now the prevailing ideology in all parts of Africa.

This serves also to lead towards breaking down the artificial boundaries set up by the rival imperialist powers. This has begun with the federation of Ghana (formerly British) and Guinea (formerly French) and the prospect of a free and united Cameroons and a free and united Somalia.

At the same time, it would be foolish not to recognise that the existing relation of class forces in the growing African liberation movements does *not* provide the guarantee that the democratic revolution can be carried through to a successful conclusion. *And the biggest weakness in the whole situation is that the working class has not advanced to the foremost position in the leadership of the national movements.*

This is true even of independent Ghana, and of Nigeria, due to win political independence in 1960. Whether the working class will advance to the leadership of the national movement first in the independent African States or in those territories still fighting for political independence will depend on a number of factors. It is already evident that the workers and peasants are a stronger force in the national movement in those territories under European minority rule in contrast to West Africa.

Faced with the tasks arising in Ghana and Nigeria in the transition from political independence to economic liberation the national bourgeoisie is clearly making serious compromises. This is expressed in the fervent appeals made for increased foreign investment, the scaling down of the development plans, and the reluctance to make a bold challenge to the new forms of imperialist domination.

On the other hand, because of the strategic military position of the territories in East and Central Africa especially, and the dependence of British imperialism on maintaining European minority rule, the liberation struggle there is bound to take a sharper turn. In this process the workers and peasants will undoubtedly advance to a stronger position in the leadership of the national movement.

The influence of Marxist ideas is growing in the ranks of the African workers, but nowhere in the British territories is there as yet an organised Marxist revolutionary party—the only political force which can give all-round leadership and give a clear perspective for the advance of the democratic revolution to the point of ending all forms of imperialist rule and exploitation and proceeding to the socialist revolution. The need to build this Party of a new type is now an essential next step.

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# Bourgeois morality and Communist morality

*R. Garaudy*

*(from his report to the recent Congress of the French Communist Party).*

BOURGEOIS ideologists, since Kant, have kept repeating that the first maxim of morals is that man should be treated always as an end and never as a means.

But the fundamental law of capitalist development makes the immense majority of mankind precisely into a means; the wage worker is, for capital, a means, a means of production.

The capitalist buys the labour power of a worker in the same way as any other merchandise, or rather as a particular type of merchandise—the kind which serves as a means to the realisation of profits. And he extracts the maximum from this labour force with a total disregard for life.

From the economic point of view, this regime accumulates riches at one pole and poverty at the other.

From the moral point of view, it develops corruption amongst those who possess and ruin for the exploited.

The rottenness of capitalism has engendered the rottenness of bourgeois morality.

When man is defined by his property, when the law of the regime is the pursuit of profit, then all human relations, all sensibilities are vitiated:

—the family is identified with inheritance,

—patriotism with colonial exploitation and chauvinism,

—liberty with egotistical individualism,

—humanism with the lies that are necessary to mask and perpetuate slavery.

The boundary between the normal functioning of the regime and crime itself becomes uncertain.

The Commission presided over by Senator Kefauver (in 1952) revealed that in the United States incomes from gambling dens, brothels, traffic in drugs and armed theft represented 17,000 million dollars, equivalent to a quarter of the State's revenue.

What is so astonishing about that?

Is there a fundamental difference between gambling dens and gambling on the Stock Exchange?

The drug traffic—is this not a form of commerce and a form of commercial freedom?

Is prostitution other than an extension to women of the principle of the exploitation of man by man?

What moralist could trace the precise frontiers between crime and the "free" play of the regime of this "free world", in which all development is governed by the pursuit of maximum profits?

Intelligence, culture, conscience are enemies; force and bestiality become the marks of nobility.

That which the Colonels of the 13th May called "psychological action" systematises the contempt for mankind and its degradation.

Claiming to modify the spirit of man by suitable techniques, they consider that man can be analysed into a small number of elemental instincts on to which one can graft, by obsessional propaganda of the Hitlerian type and by physical or moral pressure, some miserable reflexes which will function automatically! They stupefy in order to dominate.

Colonel Lacheroy—today promoted to General, no doubt because of his humanism—declared: "We must awaken the hunting and warrior instincts which exist in our men."

And here now is the result. A parachutist back from Algeria defined the "spirit of the paras" in this way: "The man who has chosen the 'paras' is distinguished by his dynamic instinct, by possessive tendencies. As a rule he hardly troubles himself with metaphysical matters. He does not think very much and reads very little: digests, thrillers, illustrateds, photo-novels and war stories."

In an army which has monitors like Bigeard and directors of conscience such as Malraux placing intrigue and despair in the first rank of moral values, there is no place for anyone who does not find exaltation in the blind ferocities of the jungle.

What does this regime make of others—those whom it exploits in the metropolitan countries and in the colonies?

The report on "The Social Situation in the World" of the Economic and Social Council of U.N.O. illustrates the law of impoverishment: in 1939, throughout the world, five human beings

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out of ten were under-nourished; fifteen years afterwards, with a gigantic increase in productivity, six out of ten—and no longer five—were permanently under-nourished.

In France, in the ten years since 1947 the number of accidents in industry has risen from 1,500,000 to 2 million a year.

At the Citroen factory, each day, 600 workers are injured.

With the campaigns for increased productivity, the number put away in mental homes has grown by 5,000 a year.

The inhumanity of the regime appears in even harsher light outside of Metropolitan France.

In Algeria, since the beginning of the war, in five years one Moslem in ten has been massacred. Amongst the survivors one in nine is in a concentration camp. An official report has revealed the horrors of these camps. Those responsible for these crimes only have not been punished, they remain the rulers of Algeria.

There is no worse hypocrisy than to claim as Pierre Limagne does in *The Cross* of April 23rd. 1959, that the methods of this war are being "humanised" and "moralised". The infamy of the end: to maintain oppression, necessarily implies the infamy of the means. Limagne wants to soothe the conscience of good-natured souls by condemning the tortures; he wants to "moralise" the war, but not to stand up against those who are pursuing it.

But in an unjust war the only morality is on the side of those who are fighting against it.

Similarly, in a regime founded on the exploitation of man, the only way to respect the human being is to combat exploitation.

And don't tell us that you love mankind if you don't hate those who degrade it and murder it.

For us, Communists, the dignity of man is a function of his real struggle to attain the sublime end to which Marx and Engels pointed in their *Manifesto*. "In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all."

Only Socialism creates the material and social conditions of a true humanism.

That is our moral ideal. That is our aim.

And the means to attain this flow from this aim: while capitalism, the enemy of man, necessarily uses criminal means for attaining its objects, Communists on the contrary, cannot use just any kind of means.

The aim: to create the conditions for a fully human life for the masses, can only be attained by the struggle of the masses themselves. Point 30 of the draft theses of our Congress states: "The establishment of Socialism cannot be the act of a faction organised in the dark, the result of a plot, or the result of intervention from outside doing violence to the majority of a people."

To win the masses the only means which can be used are those which strengthen the unity of the working class and its allies, which heighten confidence in the aim, clarity of class consciousness, and self-sacrifice on the part of every proletarian fighter. It is therefore impossible to use means which demoralise the masses.

There is no greater crime than to deceive the working class.

For example, when the railwaymen withdrew their strike order, the Executives of the Catholic and Socialist unions, in order to camouflage their capitulation in face of the Government call-up, proposed that the pretence should be made that there were some government concessions in order to justify the withdrawal of the strike call. The Executive of the C.G.T. opposed this, refusing to lie to the masses. It is indeed true that the moral exigencies of the working class struggle are more rigorous than those of "Humanist Socialism" or of "Christian spiritualism".

At the same time, when chaplains who had served in Algeria denounced "the disregard of the most elementary natural and civil laws", Mgr. Badré wrote to them: "I infinitely regret this publicity . . . we have the right—and even sometimes the duty—to guide our Bishops. But we must not give the impression that we wish to obtain support by a more or less disguised appeal to French and international opinion. Our role is to be unshaken spectators, vigilant and courageous, but not censors."

What is in question, therefore, for Mgr. Badré as for Pierre Limagne, is to confine the revolt of youth to a purely internal attitude, of "morality" as they put it, and dismiss the only means capable of putting an end to this unjust war and all the atrocities which necessarily go with it: not by being "spectators"—even unshaken, vigilant and courageous—but by telling the truth to the masses and organising their struggle against the war. It is this which separates Pierre Limagne from the young Communist soldiers whom he calumniates.

* * *

The following are the essential characteristics of our morality.

The morality of the proletariat is born of its class position; the moral values of the proletariat do not arise from the fact that it is the most

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exploited class, the class which suffers most, but from the fact that its class position is such that is cannot liberate itself except by totally destroying the capitalism which degrades man.

What makes its moral values is not poverty or misfortune but struggle.

Those who see in the working class only the decadence imposed on it by capitalism, consciously or unconsciously play the game of its enemies. The study of pauperisation does not imply, as Mendès-France claims, a doctrine of fatalism and of despair, but a call to struggle.

Whilst for all ruling classes whose morality is founded on the contradiction between the ideal world and the real world, between the soul and the body, the fundamental virtue is resignation, the fundamental virtue for the oppressed classes is struggle.

Maxim Gorky admirably defined the spirit of this morality of the working class when he said: "We must make man understand that he is the creator and the master of the world: that it is on him that responsibility falls for all that is bad in the world, but on him also is all the glory of all the good that is in life."

* * *

Today the working class is the vehicle of this human grandeur. This flows from the Marxist conception of man.

Marx showed that labour is the act by which man produces himself. The history of the world is the production of man by human labour.

In each epoch, the rising class is that which bears the future of man, it is that which opens to creative work the widest horizons by bringing the relations of production into harmony with the forces of production.

In our epoch, this class is the working class.

In fighting for its class demands, it fights for socialism.

This struggle which alone will bring to every man the means of his full development, gives the proletariat an absolute moral superiority over all other classes.

The worker cannot wage this fight alone: he can only triumph by consciously and voluntarily participating in mass action, the joint struggle of the whole class.

This unity is not spontaneous.

The Party alone can bring to the working class the scientific means of realising this unity and of winning victory.

The Party alone bears this ideal, this morality.

This is not an individualist but a socialist morality. "The communist man," writes Aragon, "is he who wishes everything for man—yes, he longs for a thousand things, happiness, good health, security—but for all—and at the price of his health, his happiness, his security and his very existence."

This morality is a materialist morality. "For true humanism," wrote Marx, "there is no worse enemy than spiritualism or speculative idealism which substitutes for real man 'consciousness of himself' or 'the soul'." If one underestimates the material conditions of the life of man, one does not change the world, but only the idea which men have made of it. Such morality always makes the bourgeoisie enthusiastic, because, if one only wants to save souls its class privileges are not threatened. The people that annoy it are those who want to save the body as well as the soul! It doesn't spare either its calumnies or its blows against these materialists.

* * *

At the Strassburg Congress, Maurice Thorez showed what the abandonment of materialism meant: the founding of socialism on a moral ideal is to refuse to base it on class struggle: "Socialism, from a science, will again become a dream."

Our morality is a scientific morality.

Reality is the source of the ideal and we deduce what the future should be from the analysis of the present world and its contradictions.

Science does not exclude morality; on the contrary, it gives duty a real basis as an expression of a social necessity. Only a sophist like Kautsky, when he tried to justify his capitulations during the First World War, could say that Marxism is content to establish the antagonism between the classes and to foretell in which way this conflict of forces would be resolved, on the pretext that the just and the unjust are not scientific categories. Pierre Hervé has again recently taken up this thesis, which has taken him too over to the enemy.

No, Marxism does not, from the standpoint of morality, put the bourgeoisie and the proletariat side by side. On the contrary, it provides an objective historical moral criterion: what favours and what shackles social development, the mastery of man over nature, the liberation of mankind? From this point of view, the a-moralism of the bourgeoisie flows from its reactionary role in society: it holds back social progress, it impedes the free development of the majority of mankind.

The moral superiority of communism flows from

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its role of liberator of all the energies of man.

The Party makes of each militant a conscious and active participant in the transformation of the world and the continued creativeness of man. It gives us the ennobling responsibility of continuing the age-old efforts of man, of his labour, of his struggles.

For the first time in history, personal morality does not come into contradiction with the collective aims set by the Party.

Personal happiness of the highest order for a Communist is the victory of the working class; happiness is to serve the cause of the overthrow of the regime of exploitation, of oppression and degradation of man, and no obstacle, no suffering, no sacrifice can deprive him of this happiness.

This communist ideal which raises the personal destiny of each individual to consciousness of and responsibility for the future of the human species, constitutes the greatest spiritual force of our time.

It inspires, throughout the world, millions of fighters and of martyrs, such as that companion of Manolis Glezos, the young Greek Communist Yannis Tsisilonnis, shot at twenty years of age, who wrote to his mother a few minutes before his execution: "When the day of liberty comes, when the bells ring their message of joy and victory, you will say, my mother, that it is Yannis—your boy—who made them ring out."

We must make the young people of our country understand that when they have the good luck to be twenty years of age at a time when there is such an upsurge of human grandeur, they are in danger of messing up their lives if they don't turn to the Party which gives man such a proud consciousness of the meaning of his life and of his death; to the Communist Party which inspires in millions of men the calm and joyous heroism of those who build; to the Communist Party which is, as Lenin wrote, "the intelligence, the honour and the conscience of our epoch."

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# Take-Over bids

*J. Wetherby*

HAROLD WILSON'S speech on take-over bids in the House of Commons on June 29th "contains just about the only issue on which the Socialists could win an election these days." (*Financial Times,* July 7th, 1959.) So says Harold Wincott, one of the trio of City journalists who interpret financial opinion. One expects Harold Wilson agrees too. Abuses connected with take-over bids "do harm to capitalism in the public estimation", says Wincott. Wilson has a number of objections to various aspects of take-over bids, mainly directed at Clore. There are good and bad bids. The "crimes" of the take-over bidders are that:

(i) those involved in them have gone to almost any length either to defend vested interests as "self-perpetuating oligarchies" or to get control;

(ii) if defeated, the directors get a lot of compensation ("once upon a time we shot people who made mistakes");

(iii) lack of information leads to "excessive speculation". Modern asset valuations would put the directors on the spot, by showing they were not making the most of the assets of their company.

(iv) dividends are kept at too low a proportion of profits—shares are undervalued and companies don't have to face up to the capital market when they want to expand.

What may be noted is that it is not capitalism that is attacked, but the abuses of capitalism.

It cannot be denied that abuses of capitalism, in its operations that affect other capitalists, can be remedied. The whole history of the Company Acts shows this. The object has been to stop capitalists in general being cheated by inside operators. But there is a difference between doing this and changing the character of capitalism's fundamental trends. These take two main lines—one towards greater mergers, and the other towards financial operations for quick profit.

The take-over bid is a technique for bringing about mergers. There are many techniques, of which forcing blunt bankruptcy is one; squeezing out is another; buying up of people's assets in a depression is even more popular. A take-over bid is an offer to purchase property or shares at a price above the current Stock Exchange level, but below what the assets can be made to pay.

It is worth glancing at the background to the business, for a take-over (with or without "a bid" —a "bid" adds the gloss of politeness to a pretty rough manoeuvre) is common form for capitalism.

The particular form that current take-over bids take is conditioned by the superstructure of control existing in advanced capitalist countries, by which owners hold shares in companies, most but not all "quoted" on the Stock Exchange, and the companies are run either by family connections or by managers appointed. For the last hundred years or so there has been a steady extension of this form of control, the handing over of firms by individual owners to the generality of capitalists, who will hold varying amounts of shares, in a number of companies, according to the profitability expected.

The concentration of company power is shown in the distribution of profits. In the latest return of the Commissioners of Inland Revenue 400 firms made 37 per cent of all company profits and 5,700 companies 75 per cent, three-quarters of the total.

Taking *dividends,* companies quoted on the Stock Exchange took 84 per cent of all ordinary dividends (in 1957) and excluding financial companies, 79 per cent of all preference and ordinary dividends.

The fight now for control is between large baronies.

## Take-Over Bids of the Olden Days

Take-over bids are now the talk of the town. But there is nothing new about them. They are the regular form which capital takes in its progress towards greater concentration. The factors which operate are twofold—changes in the price level, particularly upward changes, and changes in technique, particularly those installed during a depression, when those who have liquid capital start to put in the most modern equipment and then as the upsurge comes again take over or destroy their less efficient rivals.

It is nothing new that take-over bids often get their start from land. The greatest take-over bids were those of the Elizabethan—Elizabeth I—age, the take-over of the monastic lands. This led to the take-over of the land of the peasants and the establishment of the Whig oligarchy of the 18th century. Then when the industrial revolution came the big landlords were able, with their banking houses, many of which still exist, to make

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colossal capital gains. But even so land was developed: new methods were applied, a higher surplus value was extracted. This happened when sheep ate men, as the pamphleteers put it under Elizabeth-James I. It happened when the growing towns of the 18th century made it profitable to grow wheat with capitalist methods in East Anglia, or beef in Scotland to be fattened in the English shires. And the new town populations paid rents, rents, rents. And dead land, like dead capital, breeds no profits. The Northumberlands put their money into coal and iron.

The capital gains do give the basic start for investment by the class that seizes them from the possession of the old type of owners, who, like Falstaff or the Cavaliers of the Civil War or the pals of Charles James Fox 150 years later, live only for consumption. Where do gains come from? The main capital gains are made during periods of rising prices, when real earnings fall. That is on the home front. The biggest, of course, are made by plunder overseas—the take-over of the Americas, of the Spanish and Dutch and French Empires, the swallowing of India and then later the take-over of Africa and the rest of Asia. Keynes reckoned in an idle moment that the plunder brought back by Drake in the *Golden Hind,* at compound interest, would add up to the property of the U.S.A. in the 1930's.

The politics of the U.K. in the last three centuries could be told in terms of take-overs from the older types of capitalists by the Clores and Frasers of the day, who now be-lorded and be-knighted are as respectable as the heirs of any Norman knight who did the 1066 and all that take-over.

The point is, however, that the money must be put to work. The recent take-over bids, which came after the Tories had lifted controls on such operations, came first in land in the early 'fifties: then in production and distribution, as we see now.

### What are the Factors now Operating?

(i) The new techniques that are being evolved in industry and commerce, which call for skilled financing and acquisition of know-how; with this goes the trend for the tie-ups with U.S. firms and West Germany (and in the case of cars Italian design). With this, too, goes the tendency to acquire sub-contracting subsidiaries. The mergers for building nuclear power stations provide an example. Perhaps too the close monopoly in TV can be cited.

(ii) The ending of trade associations, fixing sales prices between firms, strengthens the tendency towards mergers—the Government cannot stop different units of one firm fixing prices! The stronger units (financially) buy out those firms which had, in some cases, just been coasting along under the shield of the price agreement.

What will the giants do as they confront each other—those that are left? Much depends on how the economic position develops. In an expanding market a recognised price level can be maintained without much trouble. But when price cutting begins, competition stirs acutely. This may now be on the way.

Many of the recent amalgamations have been of this character, that is precautionary measures to ward off decline. Courtaulds and Celanese come together; Shell makes a take-over bid for the 79 per cent of Canadian Eagle it does not own. Vickers makes a deal with Burroughs in connection with its Powers-Samas interests. The milling interests buy up not only concerns (and concerns in the Empire) but retail stores. Odhams buys Newnes and Hultons and emerges with 140 publications. The *Mirror-Pictorial* buys Amalgamated Press.

The insurance institutions have to bow to the order of the American majority owner of British Timken that they are to be bought out. A.E.I. buys Henleys and then re-organises to get into battle trim. The *News of the World* is as to 20 per cent of its interests in general printing; the Eagle Star interests keep a foot in the door and buy back the print side of Wymans, which had been sold to Menzies. The Watney-Mann amalgamation is the result of many smaller mergers. Trumans and Ind Coope form the largest grouping of pubs in the kingdom. The larger distribution chains have dragged in many considerable businesses. The Platt-Stone merger gives a new design to engineering structure. A paper bag firm goes into nuclear engineering. B.I.C.C., already owning fifty firms, buy Telcom and Scottish Cables.

(iii) Desire to spread out, diversify, "cover the risks" on the part of leading companies. Soda water takes over jam, newspapers go into TV, textile machinery joins electronic equipment, building contractors dig coal, industrial holding companies buy a bit of everything . . . this policy of buying up equipment, trade contacts and so on is typical of any depression. It is noteworthy today that the take-over may not be in the same line of business (or is finance a business?).

(iv) The opportunity opens for outside interests to take over. This opportunity arises from two sources. Both arise from inflation.

The existence of the rise in prices since the thirties has had its own quirks. It has introduced under-valuation of plant and properties into balance sheets. Companies went on with their

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fixed assets valued at 1930 or some such date, depreciated year by year when really perhaps half of it was no good and half at current prices worth much more. This applies particularly to actual land sites, or real property owned by companies; land values if they could be put into current £s became gold dust. The property companies which bought up leaseholdings as they fell in (or freeholds from heirs or impoverished dukes) had shown the way. Either the site value could be sold and a large capital gain, tax free, made and the shop or whatever it was kept on on a rented basis (as Sears did with the shoe shops acquired), and more got for current usage, or even more money could be put up to develop it properly; or the use could be changed: a pub, e.g., was no longer a pub but a rather useless building on a site that could yield more if let to someone who would pay current values. But this line of action can also be applied to usage of plant and so on. Sometimes more capital was needed. The same management in many cases still runs the firm for an industrial holding company, or "family of firms" as Tillings calls it. There are many of these, generally associated with a merchant bank —many more than Clore. Sometimes, of course, the owners did not know how to run it. As Tillings says, its Aim 4 is: "To maintain the unfettered freedom of the Boards to manage their businesses in their own way, subject always to our guidance and supervision, particularly on matters of policy and finance."

The second consideration arising from inflation is that of share values as quoted on the Stock Exchange. For these share values are the basis of a take-over bid. A share is valued at so much. A bidder will add something between this and what he thinks the future profit he can make, and makes his bid. Generally he has to add something, as the *Mirror-Pictorial* did for A.P., when a rival heaves in view: sometimes someone else gets it, as Odhams got Newnes for 98s. after *News of the World* had offered and then raising the bid to 90s. (these prices are cash plus shares in the acquiring company generally taken at their current market price. The effect is often to dilute the share of the equity held by existing owners— but still as Fraser said anyone who put up £180 in 1948 now has ten times the value.)

It is by no means the case that bidders go for unprofitable industries though they may go for companies that are not getting the profit they could make.

(v) The build-up of capital equipment which finds the outlet for goods produced checked by the slump—and competition from other industrial powers. This is where we came in—on every slump or "recession", as it is now called. We need to look at the position of the U.K. as it has emerged from the post-war make-do-and-mend.

## Britain's Position

How the position has changed in the last ten years in the U.K. can be seen from figures given by a capitalist economist. He shows the changes between 1948 and 1955 and from 1955 to 1958. In the first period, output per person employed in all industries and services rose by $2\frac{1}{4}$ per cent per annum; in the second by only $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent—and even less in some key industries, affected by the general stagnation.* Capital equipment delivered to industries and services (in constant prices, annual average) was £489 million in the first period and £587 million in the second.

On the home front between 1957 and 1959 (spring) the capitalists faced a crisis of suppressed over-production. The form it takes is of heavy investment in plant which could produce much more output but which is held back from doing so by two factors. One is the power of the financiers who insist on a squeeze. First they insisted on a squeeze imposed by high interest rates. They imposed a hold-up in money supply. The result was that the market at home was held up. The second factor is the inability to put the new equipment to full use because of union restrictions, and inability to sack skilled workers.

The contradiction between the power to produce and the market became acute. The ability to produce should by 1958 have risen by 17 per cent above the 1954 level—by 29 per cent above the level of 1948-1953.

Normally such a contradiction would have involved heavy unemployment. The nominal figures of unemployment have been low: but in fact, the number of workers who have fallen out of work has risen—married women have left, etc. The skilled workers stayed on, the marginal ones have gone. Payments have been made to buy off social trouble. Over a twentieth of the labour force has been out of work: output rises but labour engaged does not.

The investment boom, which continued during the recession, especially in the private enterprise sector, has tailed off. The public sector was cut back. It has risen at a slower rate from 1954 to 1957 (by less than a fifth) compared with the private sectors (nearly a third) and was reduced by 9 per cent between the fourth quarter of 1957 (£264 million) and the £239 million in

* In manufacturing the per head output rose by 3 per cent in the first period and 0.4 per cent in the second. (Roy Harrod, *The Director*, June 1959.)

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the third quarter of 1958, whereas the private sector went on rising though at a reduced rate. In the first quarter of 1959 the public sector investment tended to increase, whereas the private sectors fell.

But consumption demand tended to rise both in exports and at home, and the stock position—the goods held unsold in the pipeline from production to sale—which had run down, particularly in the fourth quarter of 1958, began to be replenished.

It is impossible to say how long the boom will continue. The world position is not bright. The effect on the primary producing areas of the fall in commodity prices over the last few years (the trend is beginning to change upwards) has yet to be felt. There is much dependence on U.S. demand, particularly for cars. The position in Western Europe is described in a pessimistic way by the Commission of the European Economic Community. Heavy industry is still adversely affected.

The changes taking place in the organisation of British capitalism are fundamentally due to the technical changes taking place in output and distribution. These are much more fundamental than we sometimes think. They are not only new devices (automation as it is conveniently called) but affect people all over the world. Industrialisation can grow in places and among peoples we have regarded as backward, underdeveloped and so on.

The result of this is that the organisational capitalist is posing and pouncing (as are many trade unionists) in a thoroughly out of date way. The underlying struggle between capitalists reflects the change which is due in the organisational superstructure. It also underlines the current series of wage struggles and struggles over a shorter working week. The test is productivity. The difference is not entirely between big and small units. But the exploitation of modern methods does belong to the big units, not so much on the actual production side (though they have got the money and can get subsidies etc. from the Government) but on the distribution side. The take-over bidders have some idea of this basic fact. They go for high productivity and mass market. The take-overs in print and publishing (Odhams and Hulton and Newnes; *Mirror* and A.P.) show this. Now they want the "twenty-two points" of the employers to be accepted by the unions. The same thing can be seen in milling, in motors, in shares, and no doubt in sealing wax. Diversification is a device which secures for powerful industrial-financial groupings a stranglehold on the newer types of production. This is the pattern which is facing the trade unions—and the 14 million unorganised workers.

The available figures of overall movements of wages compared with productivity, though nothing like as illuminating as figures of particular factories would be, show that a considerable ferment is going on. Between 1948 and the spring of 1959, as far as industry was concerned, the rise in productivity exceeded that of real wages by 15 per cent. The industries that beat the average were metals and metal-using and agriculture.

These figures show that capacity rose, not of course by 25 per cent overall, but additional capacity added each year had risen by 1958 by 25 per cent, whereas the market had only risen by 7 per cent (both in 1954 volume terms). The share of world manufacturing markets had diminished. There had been a considerable fall in raw material prices in 1954 values, and this went some way to explain the rise in company profits.

The position put a strain on the finances of the companies. It sought out inefficiencies or failure to use resources or the use of resources for former ends no longer needed. Hence the present spate of take-over bids.

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**Discussion contributions:**

# On the formation of nations in South Africa

*John McGrath*

LIONEL FORMAN, in his article on the Development of Nations in South Africa which appeared in the April issue of *Marxism Today,* arrives at some novel—and, in my opinion, quite erroneous—conclusions, chief among them being his statement that there are no nations in South Africa.

According to him, none of the peoples of South Africa can be considered nations either (*a*) because they do not predominate numerically in a compact territorial area, and therefore do not have the right to self-determination; or (*b*) there is no single national market which they can call their own; or (*c*) they do not have a normal class structure.

Discussing whether or not the Afrikaner people constitute a nation, Forman says: "'Common territory' *must* mean a territory on one's own, because basic to the national question is that of self-determination and the right of secession."

Stalin's well-known definition setting out the four essential characteristics of a nation is evidently insufficient for Forman. He adds a fifth, that of the right to self-determination and secession. In doing so, he merely succeeds in confusing the issues.

The question of a nation's *political rights* is one thing, the question as to whether a given people *constitute a nation* is quite another. The two categories, though inter-related, should never be confused. The right of self-determination, the right to secession, is basic to a *solution* of the national problem; it is certainly not basic to the *definition* of a nation.

Forman quotes Stalin on the Jews in Russia in support of his contention that the Afrikaners do not constitute a nation because they are dispersed among other peoples. The comparison is not a valid one, and is a good example of his failure to apply a correct historical approach.

In the first instance, the Jews were far more widely scattered—and the different groups more isolated—in Russia than are the Afrikaners in South Africa. The Jews were at no stage capable of acting together "whether in time of peace or in time of war" (Stalin, *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question,* p. 12). They were widely dispersed among a politically dominant, powerful people, far more advanced than they were (in the national sense).

Most important of all, the Jews were scattered over a huge territory, *not only extremely backward economically but sadly lacking in internal means of communication.*

### The Afrikaners

The position is quite different with the Afrikaners. They have shown their ability to act together in war, as British imperialism found to its cost during the Anglo-Boer wars. Right now (to the detriment of other peoples, it is true) they are showing no mean ability to act together in time of peace.

They are by no means a numerically insignificant minority scattered among politically more dominant and advanced peoples. They are an extremely powerful minority, even in the numerical sense, and well organised politically, culturally and economically. They are more, not less developed, as a nation, than any other people in South Africa.

Most important of all, they live within the well-established boundaries of a comparatively *highly developed capitalist state,* well served with modern means of communication, making contact between the "dispersed" groups an easy and speedy matter. (The remarkable absence of dialect in modern Afrikaans is one indication of how close this contact has been.)

It is precisely these significant *differences* between the position of the Jews in Russia and that of the Afrikaners in South Africa which should have engaged the attention of Forman, and not the superficial similarity of dispersal, on which he places such great store.

But, comparisons apart, there still remains the question whether it is theoretically possible for a people to constitute a nation where they do not have a territory or a common economic life of "their own", but share a common territory and a common economic life with others.

Stalin throws some light on this in a passage

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where he says: *"But the persons constituting a nation do not always live in one compact mass;* they are frequently divided into groups, and are interspersed among foreign national organisms. It is capitalism which drives them into other regions and cities in search of a livelihood." (p. 28, op. cit. My italics.)

It seems, therefore, that there is at least a theoretical possibility that the existence of a *shared* economic life, and a *shared* common territory, are not insuperable barriers to the formation of different nations within the bounds of a multi-national state.

The same argument applies to the question of a national market, which is bound up with that of territory.

When dealing with abnormality in class structure, Forman not only again draws a false analogy between the Jews and the Afrikaners, but is also guilty of giving a completely distorted picture of the white worker.

It is simply *not true* to say that white workers are "essentially supervisors of African labour", nor is it true to say that they are entirely *petit-bourgeois* in outlook.

Had Forman attempted to prove his bald assertion, the falsity of his position would have been manifest. He could only have done so by completely ignoring large and essential categories: steel workers, building workers, railway workers, transport workers, clerical workers, post office workers, distributive workers—the list is endless.

Even a cursory glance at the voters' rolls of any of the urban constituencies would have shown him that the overwhelming majority of the white workers are by no means "essentially supervisors of African labour", but workers in their own right.

His assertion that the white workers are "entirely petit-bourgeois in outlook" is another misconception. The white worker may be pampered and petted, protected and privileged, completely under the political influence of "his" bourgeoisie, but he is by no means petit-bourgeois in his general outlook. And what applies to the white worker in general applies to the Afrikaner worker.

## Class Structure

The Afrikaners have a normal, bourgeois class structure. Unlike the Jews in Russia, there *is* a "large and stable stratum" associated with the soil; there is a developed and fast-growing bourgeoisie, an equally fast-growing middle class, and a clearly defined working-class. The growth of capitalism in South Africa has made these class differences more and more distinct, not blurred them, as anyone who has taken the trouble to study the history of the Afrikaner people would soon realise.

In the peculiar conditions prevailing here, distortion of class structure is inevitable and is to be expected among all South African peoples, but it is by no means as distorted among the Afrikaners as Forman would have us believe.

In any case, an abnormal class structure is not necessarily proof that a people is not a nation. Distortions can and do arise at given stages of a nation's history, depending on other factors. The Russian people remain a nation to this day, in spite of the fact that their present class-structure is certainly "abnormal" compared with that of a "normal", "bourgeois" nation—they haven't any bourgeoisie at all!

Now let us leave theory for a moment and look at Afrikaner people as such.

They are a people who, over a long period, have developed a distinctive language of their own; a distinctive culture which finds expression in many ways, including literature, and distinctive national characteristics. They live within the confines of a single territory and are closely bound together by a single economic life, even if shared with others.

In the same way as Americans, they do not regard themselves, not can they be regarded, as "Europeans". They call themselves "whites" (in contrast to the English South African, who still calls himself a "European".) Indeed their very name, the one they have given themselves, means "African".

In their struggle to maintain their rights, this *African* people have fought two wars against British imperialism, successfully resisted all attempts (whether by Dutch or British) to destroy their language, and equally successfully resisted assimilation with other peoples.

For the past sixty years at least, their development has taken place under conditions of rising capitalism (i.e. *under the very conditions which give rise to the birth of nations.*)

Today, in a modern, independent bourgeois state, they supply the bulk of the armed forces (the standing army and the police force), staff the civil service and, through the medium of a powerful national political organisation, impose "their" will (which is the will of their landowners and bourgeoisie) on the rest of the South African peoples.

As Forman, quoting Potekhin, says: a nation is not an imaginary or mystical concept—it is a very real phenomenon. The very real—if peculiar—phenomenon of the Afrikaner nation cannot be wished out of existence by describing them as

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a national group, whose right to self-determination, to political secession, Forman, by implication, rejects.

### Self-determination

It is when dealing with the right to self-determination that Forman paints a very peculiar picture indeed. It is precisely on this issue that his contention that there are no nations in South Africa leads him into the realms of speculation, where the harsh realities of the present day national struggles almost cease to exist.

"When freedom is won," says Forman, "the Afrikaners and other national groups, if they so desire, will, no doubt, obtain the opportunity to develop into nations, being given the essential territorial basis for such development, as has happened in the U.S.S.R. and China." (Forman does not elaborate on what he means by "freedom", though it is vital to a solution of the national question.)

No doubt. But being given the opportunity to develop into a nation is one thing, and the right to self-determination, the most important element of which is the right to secession, is another.

And who is to give them this "right", the right to develop into nations? The other people of South Africa? Yet the other peoples, according to Forman, are only pre-nations whose own right to self-determination depends entirely on "progressives" who "might, in certain circumstances" accord them that right.

Where there are no nations there is no right to self-determination, to political secession, except in the dim and distant future, when the "national groups" or the "pre-nations" have developed into nations. For the present, and until nations have developed, there is only the right to regional autonomy for the national groups and nothing definite at all for the pre-nations.

That is where Forman's arguments lead us, and they come uncomfortably close to a denial of the right to self-determination. They open the door to opportunism, for dominant nations, as in South Africa, are ever ready with the cry: "You are not yet ready. Wait a little while longer."

The *recognition* of the right to self-determination, to secession, *must be unconditional* even if, as Lenin said, "the chance of secession being possible and 'feasible' before the introduction of socialism is only one in a thousand." (Quoted by Stalin, p. 198, op. cit.)

(The recognition of the right to secession does not, of course, mean the same thing as support for any particular demand for secession.)

Forman, as I said earlier, deserts reality for speculation when dealing with the right to self-determination. He discusses it in the abstract, as if we already had a single socialist, soviet state in South Africa. He forgets that the struggle has not yet been won, and that the course of the struggle might take a very different path to that he has mapped out.

Reality makes nonsense of his assertion that "although in Europe the demand for self-determination in some form was a characteristic feature of the national struggle, this is not the case in South Africa".

The question of the right to self-determination, in one form or another, is ever present in South African politics, and therefore cannot be ignored.

The Afrikaner has raised it time and time again *vis-à-vis* British imperialism, and even today the demand for a republic figures prominently in the Nationalist Party programme. It arises in relation to the Protectorates and South-West Africa.

More important still, the Afrikaner bourgeoisie is raising the issue (although distorted) in an increasingly sharp form internally, *vis-à-vis* the African peoples in particular.

The arch-apostles and theorists of apartheid have been moving steadily from the concept of "horizontal" apartheid to that of "vertical" apartheid, i.e. the creation of separate territorial areas. This concept finds concrete expression in the controversial "Promotion of Bantu Self-Government" Bill now before the Union parliament, whereby the Nationalists seek to create a fantastic edifice of "autonomous" tribal regions (with, however, no real rights) for the African peoples.

Some Afrikaner bourgeoisie theorists have gone even further (and by so doing have inadvertently exposed the reactionary, oppressive and fraudulent nature of the Nationalist Government's policy). For example, a certain Professor Coetzeen recently proposed the creation of *separate and entirely independent states,* even if this meant, as he put it, "a considerable displacement of the white population".

So we see that the Afrikaner bourgeoisie, in their desperation, are themselves pushing the question of self-determination very much on to the agenda, as it were, and thereby make it a matter for practical (as opposed to speculative) politics.

The oppressed non-white peoples, on the other hand, strenuously oppose the policy of apartheid, of separation, whether horizontal or vertical. Their counter-demand is for a single, multi-national state, in which full democracy for all will guarantee the rights of the different nationalities.

*The most significant factor in the national liberatory struggle in South Africa, the factor*

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*which distinguishes it from previous similar movements in Europe and, indeed, from similar movements in the rest of Africa today, is the fact that here it is the working class and revolutionary intelligentsia among the oppressed peoples which is taking the lead in the struggle.*

The revolutionary working-class tends naturally towards unity, internationalism; the bourgeosie tends, just as naturally, towards disunity, national exclusiveness.

The demand for a single, fully democratic, multi-national state is therefore not merely a *negative* "absence of a demand for self-determination". It is, above all, a *positive* demand which has a specific *working-class revolutionary content.*

One further point remains on the issue of self-determination, for it will be asked: how is the Afrikaner, at present dispersed among other nationalities, to exercise the right to secession in the absence of a separate territory? What part of South Africa would we give him? Are we not being impracticable when we say his right to self-determination must be recognised when no opportunity exists for him to secede?

No, we are not being impracticable. If the Afrikaner, either on his own or together with others, were to demand the right to secession, the opportunity for him to do so would have to be provided in the shape of a separate territory. To force him to remain within the same state as others against his will would not only violate his right to secede but leave the national problem unsolved.

How it would be done, and what separate territory would be provided is not a question which we need answer now. For, as Lenin said, dealing with this very question of "practicability", "it is a matter that will be determined by a thousand factors, which cannot be foreseen." It might never even arise, for the course of history is not yet run.

The important thing is not when, where or how, or whether the Afrikaner will ever demand secession, or even whether it is desirable. The fear the Afrikaners have of being "swamped" in a multi-national, fully democratic state, is one on which the Afrikaner bourgeoisie is constantly playing. To *recognise* the right of the Afrikaner to self-determination *now* will go a long way towards dispelling those fears. It would assist in weaning the workers and other sections away from "their" bourgeoisie, and make it easier to persuade them to move in the opposite direction —towards a truly democratic, multi-national South African state.

What form such a state would take, whether it would be a federation of states or a collection of autonomous regions, or something else again, is really a matter for speculation, and I am quite willing to leave that aspect to Mr. Forman.

* * *

Space does not permit me to deal with the question as to whether any of the African peoples can be considered nations. That would require far more detailed treatment than is possible here.

Suffice it to say that the question is far more complicated than Forman realises. Among other things, one would have to examine very carefully the effect which the impact of capitalism has made on the different peoples. It cannot be answered by juggling with formulae.

Potekhin says, for instance, that several of the African peoples in South Africa (e.g., the Zulus and Xhosas) had already reached the "narodnost" stage at the beginning of the present century. Almost sixty years of intensive political, social and economic development have taken place since then, and it might very well be that some of these African peoples have already reached the stage where they may be considered as nations.

## *Lionel Forman*

IT was not as a mental exercise that the Bolsheviks went to such great pains, in 1913, to state clearly what it was that they meant by the term "nation". They did so because there was an urgent practical need to define clearly the type of community for which Communists would advance the slogan of self-determination.

This required an analysis of the *specific* characteristics which make a community so tightly knit and economically integrated that it is capable of leading a separate political existence.

Stalin's definition, involving common territory, language, culture and economy, as expounded by Potekhin in the article which began this controversy,[1] has been tested in practice through the years, and found to serve its purpose so well that it has been accepted universally by Communists as the starting-point of all discussions on the question.

Stalin declares, *"there is no nation which at one and the same time speaks several languages".*[2]

I would be the last to suggest that Stalin's words must be treated as gospel, but I certainly *do* suggest that Comrade J. T. Adams should lay *some* sort of theoretical foundation before he in effect declares blithely that this definition is

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1 *Marxism Today,* October, 1958.
2 *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question,* Lawrence and Wishart, 2nd Edition, p. 6.

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obviously wrong: "Quite clearly a nation exists in South Africa—not Afrikaans not English—but South African, composed of people who use Afrikaans and English languages and cultures."[3]

Comrade Adams appears to equate the terms "State" and "Nation", as, for example, where he talks of Switzerland, the Soviet Union, India and even the Boer Republics as nations, and seems, from his concluding paragraph, to argue that a single national market (meaning in the context a single state market) is all that is required for nationhood. He may well have something valuable to add to Marxist theory, and I do not question that according to his *own* definition there is a South African nation. But before we can examine Comrade Adams' contribution he must tell us *what his definition is,* and even more important, he must tell us *in what way his definition is better than the one at present used by Marxists.* Until he does so it is futile to continue the discussion because we will be, in effect, arguing in different languages.

John McGrath, like Comrade Adams, takes issue with me for claiming, in Comrade McGrath's paraphrase, that a nation *"must* have a territory and a common economic life which they can call 'their own'."

It seems to me simple logic that a community which, because it *nowhere* has a piece of territory in which it constitutes a majority of the population and which is therefore *physically incapable of seceding from anywhere,* cannot be a nation. This does not add anything to Stalin's definition as Comrade McGrath claims—it is implicit in the "common territory" in that definition.

I agree with most of the things Comrade McGrath says about the white Afrikaners, and endorse that they are vastly different in most respects from the Jews of Tsarist Russia. All I say is that they are not a nation. Incidentally, almost the whole of Comrade McGrath's first description of the Afrikaners, from their "ability to act together in war", right up to their "modern means of communication" applies equally to a large and efficient army of occupation. Such an army would also not be a nation.

Nor is it necessary for Comrade McGrath to devote pages to proving the obvious facts that many nations are widely dispersed and share their territory with others. All such nations have *somewhere, some* territory "of their own", meaning by that a territory where they constitute the majority of the population.

I am fully in agreement with him about the leading role of the African working class in the national movement and his attempt to make an argument about this is artificial.

Comrade McGrath makes the very emphatic demand for the right of the Afrikaners (meaning white Afrikaners) to secede. To accord them the right to develop into a nation, capable of secession, is not enough, he says. But the whole point is that *you can't secede without a bit of territory to secede with you.* And surely the rights of the Afrikaners are not so much greater than the rights of other South Africans that we can force a non-Afrikaner majority of any part of our country to secede with the Afrikaner, or to move somewhere else—for that is the *only* way that we could at present *guarantee* the white Afrikaner the right to secede.

Comrade McGrath is a clear-thinking man, for whose views I have a great deal of respect, so I can only assume that he was overtired when he thought up the idea that the Afrikaner nationalist policy of driving the Africans into labour reservoir "Bantustans" bears any sort of relationship to self-determination. And I am utterly aghast at his statement that the new Apartheid Bill is a "concrete expression" of a move "from the concept of 'horizontal' apartheid to that of 'vertical' apartheid". The claim by the Nationalists that they are only trying to change the position from the unjust one in which the whites are at the top and the blacks at the bottom in South Africa, to one in which whites and blacks live equally side by side in separate territories has been exposed by the Congresses, by *New Age,* by Comrade McGrath himself, and by almost everyone else outside the Nationalist ranks as a complete fraud. The Bill does not, in fact, change the situation of horizontal apartheid, with whites at the top and blacks at the bottom, in one society, by one iota.

### The Afrikaners

It is necessary, however, to add an important qualification to my remarks about the Afrikaner nation. My article and the replies both of Comrade Adams and McGrath considered the Afrikaners in the lily-white image painted by the Afrikaner Nationalists. But if there is in fact an Afrikaner nation, it does *not* consist of the $1\frac{1}{2}$ million Afrikaners who can claim white identity cards, but of about $2\frac{1}{2}$ million people. Once one breaks through the Nationalist smokescreen one sees that *the Afrikaans-speaking Coloureds are part of the same national community as their whiter brothers* — common language, economy, culture and all. Except for the political and social discrimination there is nothing at all to distin-

[3] *Marxism Today,* July, 1959.

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guish the very substantial proportion of Afrikanerdom which, though technically Coloured, passes for white from that proportion which is too dark, or too proud to pass.

And what is so ironical is that the Coloureds are one of "Afrikanerdom's greatest national assets". With them Afrikanerdom has a territory where it is in the majority, with a few good-sized towns; and it has a much better balanced class structure.

Although the present leaders of white Afrikanerdom would choke at the idea, it is very possible that under conditions of freedom the single white and Coloured Afrikaner nation will be one of the first to consolidate itself, and that its Afrikaner language and culture will blossom as never before.

At the same time it must be noted that the position is by no means static. The political discrimination against the Coloureds is creating something akin to a Coloured national consciousness, separated from that of the white Afrikaner, and comparable with that of the Negro of the U.S. The South African Coloured People's Organisation is thought of as a national organisation like those of its African and Indian allies in the Congress alliance. But an optimistic estimate of the time required for winning freedom would preclude the development of a separate Coloured nation born of "race" oppression.

Comrade McGrath is right when he stresses that the demand for a single, fully democratic, multi-national state is not merely a negative absence of a demand for self-determination but a positive demand.

The African National Congress has, since about 1947, had, as part of its standing policy, the demand for self-determination, and it can properly be said that the oppressed national groups in South Africa have made it clear that the *way* they wish *to determine their own destinies* is within the framework of a united South African state.

But the big question is whether it is realistic for us to think, as Comrade Adams does, that the people's democratic South Africa will be a ready made, single, fused nation; or whether, as I believe, the correct Marxist perspective is to recognise the fact that South Africa is by no means a single nation at present, cannot become a single nation until democracy has been won, and will not, even with a people's democratic government, become a nation overnight.

If the latter view is correct then the words of Stalin, in his report to the Sixteenth Congress of the C.P.S.U. in 1930, are apposite for South Africa.

> "It may seem strange that we, who are in favour of the fusion of national cultures in the future into one common culture (both in form and content), with a single, common language, are at the same time, in favour of the *blossoming* of national cultures at the present time, in the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat. But there is nothing strange in this. The national cultures must be permitted to develop and expand and to reveal all their potential qualities, in order to create the conditions necessary for their fusion into a single, common culture with a single, common language. The blossoming of cultures national in form and socialist in content under a proletarian dictatorship in one country, *with the object* of their fusion into a single, common socialist (both in form and content) culture, with a single, common language, when the proletariat is victorious throughout the world and socialism becomes an everyday matter—such is the dialectical nature of the Leninist presentation of the question of national culture."

Under conditions of democracy the national communities which inhabit South Africa will flower into nations, and it is through this brotherhood of equal South African nations, united in a single state, that a South African nation will one day come into being.

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